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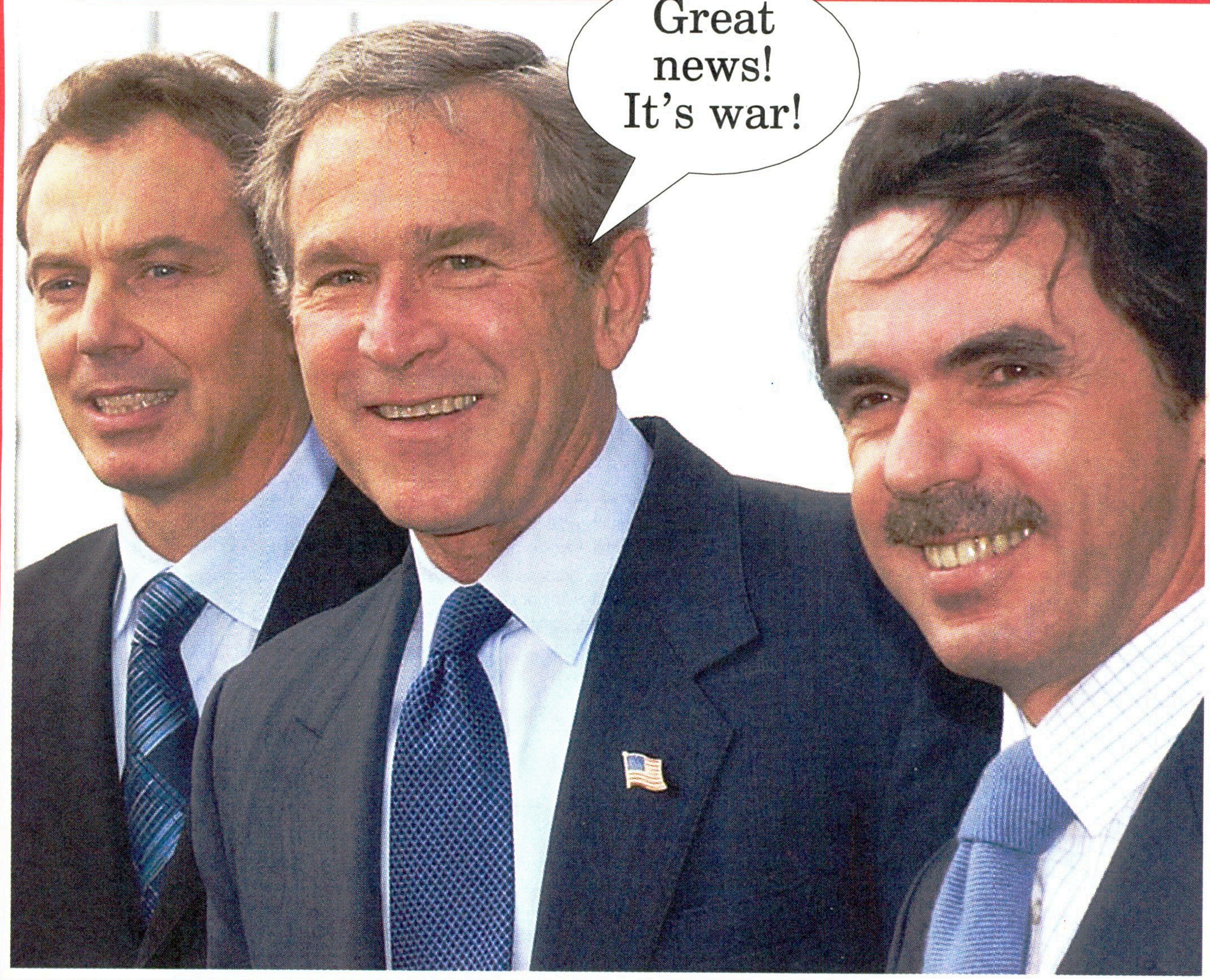

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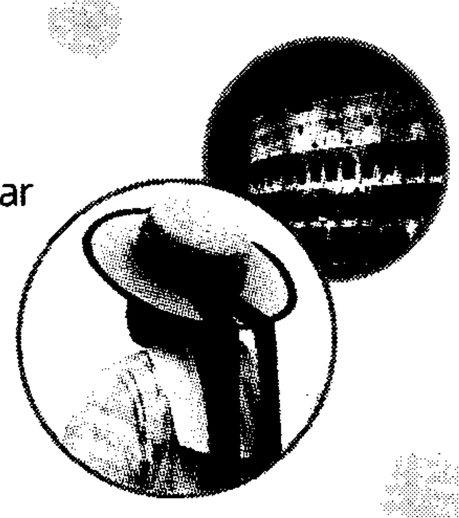

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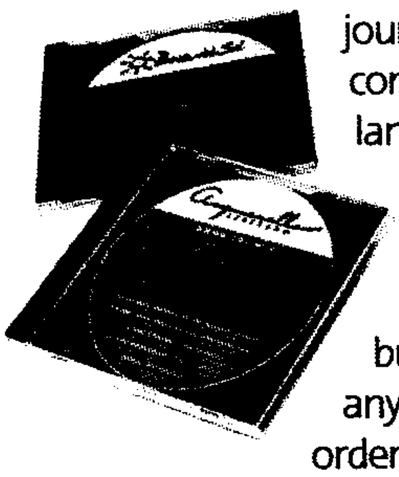

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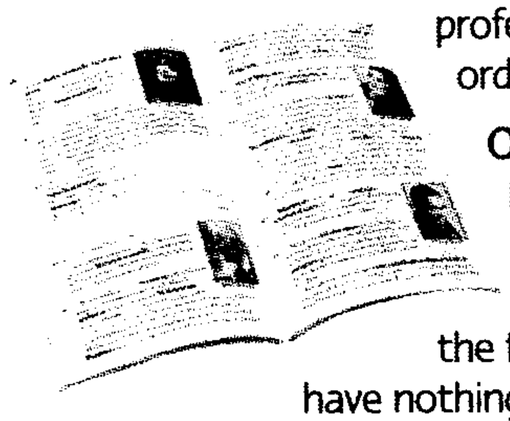

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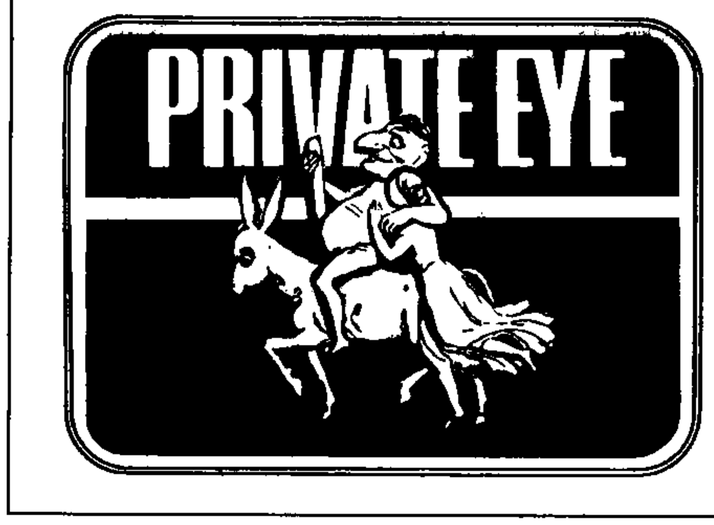


"If you don't wish to see the results, look away now!"

JUST FANCY THAT!

"President Bush said this is the end of democracy... sorry, diplomacy."

– Newsreader, BBC News 24, 7 March.

LAST November Robin Cook "privately" told one or two close confidants in the Labour movement that "I share your concerns about Iraq". But the cunning old fox kept his powder dry until it was crystal clear that the Dear Leader was determined to follow Dubya all the way to Baghdad. Now he has his moment in the limelight.

Not that this stopped Cookie from tipping the wink to anxious MPs wanting to know where he stood as Labour threatened to split down the middle. He was spotted very recently walking down a Commons corridor with Jack Straw by some of them – and only after he had opened a door to allow Straw through did he turn conspiratorially and say: "Got themselves into a fine pickle, haven't they?"

WHILE Tony Blair has managed to fall out with just about everyone at the United Nations, successor-in-waiting Gordon Brown has launched a charm offensive to get the organisation on side.

At a recent treasury conference organised by the Grow Up Free From Poverty Coalition, attended by 200 sixth-formers from around the UK, the chancellor made straight for the representatives of the UN.

"Hello," he beamed. "Where do you go to school?"

SO what happened to the great Labour rebellion that was supposed to lead to the calling of a Special Labour party conference designed to knock the Dear Leader from his pedestal before he could take the country to war?

After much wire-crossing and plenty of red faces – not least at the BBC, which broke the story – the great rebellion fizzled out.

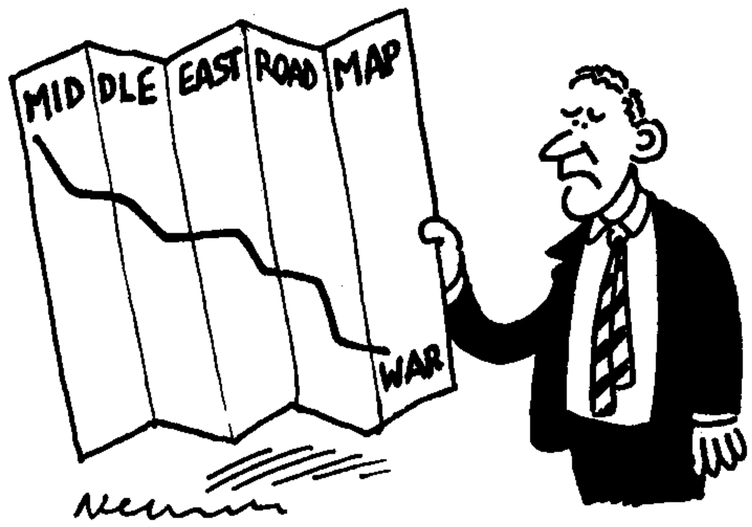
Last Tuesday, the *Today* programme breathlessly revealed that rebel Labour MPs had written to the party's ruling national executive committee demanding that it convene a special conference. This was news to NEC members, none of whom had received such a letter. It later transpired that Halifax MP Alice Mahon had talked of writing a letter – but that most of her colleagues thought it a waste of time since the NEC is packed with Blair loyalists.

News of a nascent rebellion cheered the neolithic whips' office, however, which used it as a device to whip moderate MPs back into line. And so the threatened eruption of anger from the backbenches never took place at the weekly parliamentary Labour party meeting; and by the time prime minister's questions took place, most MPs had dutifully fallen into line.

Not that Tony Blair can afford to sleep soundly in his bed: as we go to press, his decision to ahead with the United States, without a second UN resolution, has stirred even the most comatose, Labour MPs into renewed self-righteous anger.

THE Russian government insisted that it would use its veto against any UN resolution that gave the green light for war against Iraq.

It's taking a less principled stand, however, when it comes to making money out of the conflict. Antonov transport aircraft, complete with engineers and crews, are being leased to the RAF to ferry perishable supplies to Our Boys. (For equally principled French position, see *Letter From Paris*, p. 15.)



THE allies will be using a number of unpleasant weapons in the war against Iraq. And the use of depleted-uranium shells as an efficient armour-piercing weapon has already been spotlighted as a possible cause of thousands of cancer deaths among the Shia Marsh Arabs of southern Iraq following the last Gulf war.

But, according to sources in the World Health Organisation, there is also evidence that the cancers and birth defects seen around Basra may have been linked to chemicals used by Saddam Hussein himself in his brutal wars against his own peoples – particularly against the Kurds in the north and rebellious Shias in the south – and swept along by the rivers that feed the Tigris and Euphrates.

This is not an argument for using depleted uranium, but it is worth remembering that, when it comes to environmental terrorism, the current Iraqi regime, which set fire to the oil wells in Kuwait during the last war, is without peer.

MOMENT OF TRUTH

Court Circular

THE PEAT report has been widely hailed as the victory of modernising Sir Michael over the hidebound Prince of Wales. And, indeed, it may well turn out to mark the beginning of the end... for Sir Michael Peat.

In his seven months at St James's Palace, Charles's new private secretary has found few friends, being viewed as an outsider come in to change things. In fact Charles refused to give him such a remit at the start, so determined was he to protect his favourites. It was only the collapse of the Burrell and Brown butler trials which gave Peat the mandate he wanted. Charles and his inner circle, however, have determinedly undermined him every step of the way.

Peat wanted his report published later in the spring and at a time when Charles was in the country to make a personal statement to the press (although probably not allowing questions). There was also an idea of allowing a recorded interview on the report with a trusted journalist. Instead, on the advice of Mark Bolland, Charles's former spin doctor, the prince insisted the report was issued when it would be swamped by war talk and he himself was out of the country.

Michael Fawcett's "golden goodbye" package was substantially increased by Charles against Peat's wishes – including the continued grace and favour use of his £450,000 Duchy of Cornwall home in London. This was partly done to offset the very real fears of Charles, Camilla and William that Fawcett may yet be tempted to sell his highly explosive story on life inside St James's Palace. Charles also insisted on retaining Fawcett to organise his social life on a freelance basis and at an increased cost – much to accountant Peat's chagrin.

The timing of Fawcett's resignation announcement, shortly after the report was issued, was arranged by Charles and Bolland to deflect attention from the content of the report itself. Peat was not consulted about the timing, merely informed just before it happened. Meanwhile Bolland, now working freelance for Camilla, is ready to resume working either directly for Charles or take on the job of spinning for William when he completes his degree.

Charles's two most trusted advisers, Fawcett and Bolland, will continue to have free access to Charles and Peat will be a very distant number three in his counsels. Fawcett and Bolland also have the support of Camilla, whose influence over Charles is often understated.

Peat now realises what an uphill struggle it will be to get Charles to change and present him as a man fit to be king. Picking up his career in the City may well prove a more attractive option.

'Flunkey'

Street of Shame

"YET more arrests in London last week as part of Operation Ore, the Scotland Yard investigation into suspected paedophiles," we reported last December (*Eye* 1070). "Now the *Eye* learns that Inspector Knacker has another suspect in his sights, who has been under surveillance for several weeks. The man in question is an executive employed by Richard 'Dirty' Desmond!"

Lo and behold, last Wednesday the Operation Ore Squad arrested 43 suspects – including Andy Bull, deputy editor of the *Sunday Express*.

Bull, who resigned his post and steadfastly insists on his innocence, is not, however, the executive to whom we referred three months ago. So it seems that the Operation Ore list has not one but two of Richard Desmond's top lieutenants on it. How embarrassing for Dirty Des, especially as his *Sunday Express* has been waging an energetic campaign to expose "perverts" who subscribed to kiddie-porn websites. As part of the campaign, Andy Bull recently dispatched the paper's crime reporter Andrea Perry to the US on a mission to obtain the complete list of suspects, but – alas! – she came home empty-handed.

Even more embarrassing for Des is that he learned of Inspector Knacker's latest swoop only when he read Thursday's *Daily Mail* – even though other *Express* executives knew on Wednesday that Bull had been arrested. Hapless gofer Paul Ashford had put himself in charge of "damage limitation" but somehow neglected to tell his boss, perhaps in the hope that nothing would appear in rival papers and therefore Desmond needn't know. The wrath of Dirty Des on Thursday morning was terrible to behold.

The *Mail*, by contrast, was jubilant. Curiously, there was no space in its gleeful report ("Express Newspapers Executive Arrested in Child Porn Raids") to mention that Andy Bull had previously been an executive at, er, the *Mail* group. The story was also going to be a page-lead in the *Times* – until deputy editor Ben Preston pointed out that Bull used to be in charge of, er, the *Times*'s own website, whereupon it was hastily relegated to the "News in Brief" section.

THE *Daily Telegraph*, ever high-minded about the tabloids' prejudicial reporting of crime investigations, managed a legal double-whammy with a report on "honour crimes" in Britain's Asian communities on 10 March.

It illustrated the piece with a large picture of Anita Ginhda, who police believe was murdered as revenge for marrying outside her Sikh community – and captioned it "strangled by her husband in front of their young son".

IN THE last Eye we noted that the design of Dirty Des's celebrity mag New appeared to be a straight rip-off of rival Now. It now transpires that there's nothing very new about its contents, either. The alleged "exclusive" interview with Justin Timberlake was taken

"Victory in a nuclear conflict will be ours and the red flag of army-first politics will flutter ever more vigorously," state radio said, reported by South Korea's Yonhap news agency.

"Our victory is certain and the future ever more radiant,"

Gulf News

straight from the pages of Rolling Stone, where it first appeared in January.

But then, as readers of Dirty Des's porn titles know, he has always been committed to recycling old rubbish.

THE Edinburgh Evening News, part of Andrew "Brillo Pad" Neill's mighty media empire, has introduced an exciting new columnist. He is billed as "Peter MacMahon – Cutting Through the Spin."

In his debut column on 4 March, MacMahon confessed to having once worked briefly "as a 'spin-doctor' at the Scottish Executive". How modest of him. He was in fact Scotland's version of Alastair Campbell, serving as chief PR adviser to first minister Henry McLeish – who famously bounced from one PR crisis to another, with little or no help from his pisspoor spin-doctor, before being forced to resign in November 2001.

MacMahon is clearly just the person to comment on the failings of the Scottish Executive. Hats off to Brillo Pad for another inspired signing!

ATTRACTIVE, SUCCESSFUL, creative male, married, two kids, saddo love and sex life, seeks attractive female, 30-405

Private Eye

WHEN *Express* news desk apparatchik Dan Townend suggested a spread bet on the outcome of an England world cup cricket match, his colleagues pricked up their ears. Townend has, after all, just completed a book on the mysteries of spread betting. And he assured everyone this particular spread bet was certain to succeed.

With pound signs flashing in their eyes, news editor Dave Leigh, foreign editor Gabriel Milland and several other senior managers rushed to place their bets.

Spirits were high when the match began. But as the day drew on, faces grew longer and longer. Despite his apparent expertise and the certainty of the bet, Townend's brilliant advice lost his news-desk colleagues almost £2,000 by close of play.

FILM publicists know that the *Daily Mail*'s Baz Bamigboye can be relied on for a positive quote about any film that allows him to tell an anecdote about his showbiz "friends". Less well known are his critical opinions of the staff and other attendees at the various screening theatres he frequents, though he enjoys broadcasting them at the top of his voice.

"Fuck off you moron!" was his considered view of an usherette at a press screening for *The Banger Sisters*, who tried to tell him which door he should go through. Even more expressive were the words he chose for two latecomers to a preview of *25th Hour*: "Fucking unforgivable – how fucking dare you – why don't you just fuck off?"

FROM his remote farmstead in New Hampshire, bearded Canadian hack Mark Steyn files many thousands of words every week to papers owned by his great chum and fellow-Canuck Conrad Black. And, as part of his deal with milord Black, mere editors aren't allowed to change a dot or comma of his copy.

This might explain why no one at the office queried a preview of the Oscars, printed in the *Sunday Telegraph* on 9 March, in which Steyn argued that Nicole Kidman's chance of an Oscar wouldn't be harmed by tabloid articles about her being a "homewrecker" since the story about her and Jude Law "has gone all but unreported over here".

Alas, it seems the American papers had also neglected to report that Kidman is suing the *Sun* and *Daily Mail* for this very allegation. The actress's ferocious London lawyer Keith "Rottweiler" Schilling immediately threatened legal action against the *Torygraph* as well unless a prominent and grovelling apology appeared in the very next issue.

Hopelessly out of his depth in the world of tabloid showbiz sex-scandals, editor Dominic Lawson complied forthwith. "We fully accept that these reports were untrue," his paper admitted last Sunday. But, sparing the blushes of Mark Steyn and his patron Lord Black, it neglected to mention which overpaid Canadian hack was responsible for this vile libel and its embarrassing consequences.

HACKWATCH

Hari's Game

JOHANN HARI, the Independent's new columnist, has been bemoaning the "corrosive acid of distrust" in public life. "We in the press are least trusted of all British institutions," observes the 24-year-old pundit, who was shortlisted as young journalist of the year in this week's British Press Awards. "The number of my friends who assume that we just make up stories – even at a reputable paper such as the Independent – is startling."

Not that startling, surely, especially if they are regular readers of Johann Hari. He began his career as the voice of yoof in July 2001, just after finishing his university finals, by boasting about his drug habit to readers of the *New Statesman*. "Another Cambridge May Week has rolled around," he wrote, "and I, like half of Cambridge, celebrated with a few tabs of Ecstasy and the odd line of coke."

Fleet Street editors were thrilled: the *Sindie* reprinted his piece, and a few months later the London *Evening Standard* invited him to do an encore. Hari obliged by defending "the Ecstasy I know and love" against the tut-tutting of the home secretary. "Clearly, David Blunkett needs to be informed of the basic facts about one of Britain's most popular drugs," he raved. "If he fancies trying one, I'll be happy to take him to a decent club. But in the meantime, I'll try to explain why so many of us use the drug weekly." He duly went on to describe the sensation of being "loved up" and "at one".

In fact, however, the young rascal had never taken Ecstasy: before writing his lyrical account he had to phone a friend and ask what it felt like! And now, less than two years later, he has already forgotten his brief incarnation as an e-fiend. "Ecstasy defined the generation of my older siblings, not mine," he wrote in the *Indie* two weeks ago. "Ecstasy is out."

No matter: it served its purpose, and Hari was on a roll. A couple of weeks after his original ecstasy article he went to Genoa for the G8 summit and sent a vivid despatch to the *New Statesman* about the death of anti-globalisation protester Carlo Giuliani. "On Friday, before the real business of the summit began, the police shot him twice in the head and then ran him over," he reported. "They killed him, even though he carried no weapon other than a fire extinguisher. When I saw the scene, I couldn't believe so much blood had poured from just one body." Yet, as several witnesses can attest, Hari wasn't there, having hailed a taxi to escape the scene some time before Giuliani was killed.

Now that he's a fully-fledged pundit, Hari has been pontificating in the *Indie* and on *Newsnight* about his support for a war against Saddam Hussein. The Iraqis want to be bombed, he says, even if more than 100,000 of them die: he knows, because he's been there and talked to them. "Last October, I spent a month as a journalist seeing the reality of life under Saddam Hussein," he wrote on 10 January. "Most of the Iraqi people I encountered... would hug me and offer coded support."

Actually, Hari spent two weeks in Iraq as a holidaymaker, on a package tour visiting ancient archaeological sites. He wrote about the trip in the *Guardian* on 3 December last year. In that article, however, he complained that it was "very difficult to get Iraqis to express their feelings... I blundered about asking fairly direct political questions, which caused people to recoil in horror... Many people asked quite genuinely 'why your government hates the Arab world'." He also met many "dignified, stoical Iraqis" and "doe-eyed children" who complained about western sanctions.

The only person who eventually offered "coded support" was an old man in a souk who had visited London in the 1970s. "After much oblique prodding, he said warmly, 'I admire British democracy and freedom.' He held my gaze. 'I very much admire them.' He added, 'We do not know what is coming. The news we receive here is... unclear.'"

And, er, that's it. Yet in an *Indie* column on 15 February, Hari claimed that people in Iraq asked him: "When will you come to free us? When will we be able to live again?" Since these pleas from Iraqis yearning for the bombers to arrive must surely have struck him as newsworthy, why didn't he mention them in his original *Guardian* feature?

Answer comes there none. The only question troubling this journalistic *wunderkind* at the moment is why on earth British newspaper readers suspect that hacks "just make up stories".

Number crunchings

150

■ column inches devoted to whereabouts of "Peterborough" diary in national press last week

100

■ column inches devoted to news from Peterborough, or anywhere in UK outside London, in national press last week

AD NAUSEAM

ON 19 December 2001 the Daily Telegraph took a wry look at the parliamentary register of MPs' interests. Particular chortling was reserved for Peter Mandelson's free gyms, magazine columns and junkets. "Mr Mandelson also has a directorship with Clemmow Hornby Inge, a new company set up by two advertising executives who have worked for the Labour party," the article concluded.

Less than a week later none other than Clemmow Hornby Inge, the agency peddled by the *Torygraph* as a hotbed of new Labour cronyism, was awarded the newspaper's advertising account. At the time Ad Nauseam asked (*Eye* 1045): "Does [*Telegraph* editor Charles] Moore know that the people responsible for the public face of his newspaper have as a shareholder and consultant one P. Mandelson? If this year brings some truly appalling *Telegraph* advertising, we will know who's been pulling the strings."

Well, we were wrong about one thing: the truly appalling advertising has taken *more* than a year to emerge. Two 30-second slots broke on 3 March, both using the "Read a bestseller everyday" strap. The pitch is that the *Torygraph* is a bestselling novel full of intrigue and zest.

In one spot, a copy of the newspaper is given as a birthday present at a chardonnay-swilling 25-34 shindig. The blue-rinse brigade is conspicuous by its absence. In the other, two Bridget Joneses enter a lift and discuss the *Telegraph* like it was the new must-read chunk of chick lit.

The central "bestseller" pun is ironic, of course, as the whole reason for the current marketing splurge is that the *Telegraph* is becoming less and less of a bestseller every day. Staff at the paper know that a simpler way to change its image would be to stop Barbara Amiel hijacking the op-ed pages whenever she feels like venting her spleen. But even more galling for *Telegraph* staffers culled during recent cost-cutting must be the £8m price tag for this tosh.

WITH NatWest's recent advertising poking fun at other banks for closing local branches and selling them off as "trendy wine bars", it was only a matter of time before such hubris came back to haunt them.

In the latest ad a man stands outside a NatWest bank and explains proudly that "his" bank lets you telephone your branch rather than a faceless drone at a call centre. As it happens, the building the man is standing outside is the old NatWest branch at Hampton Court – "old" because it closed in 1996. It was originally marketed as an ideal site for a restaurant or "trendy wine bar". But NatWest has never managed to sell it; and these days its main use is as a set for films, television and, er, adverts.

COLLATERAL DAMAGE

"Will Mr Blair be the war's first casualty?" – *Mail on Sunday*.

"Duncan Smith first casualty as skirmishes begin." – The *Times*.

"Blair's Lib-Dem love-in is first casualty of war." – *Evening Standard*.

"Cabinet solidarity, war's first casualty." – The *Times*.

"Europe is the first casualty of war." – *Financial Times*.

"The first casualty of war is television ratings." – *The Business*.

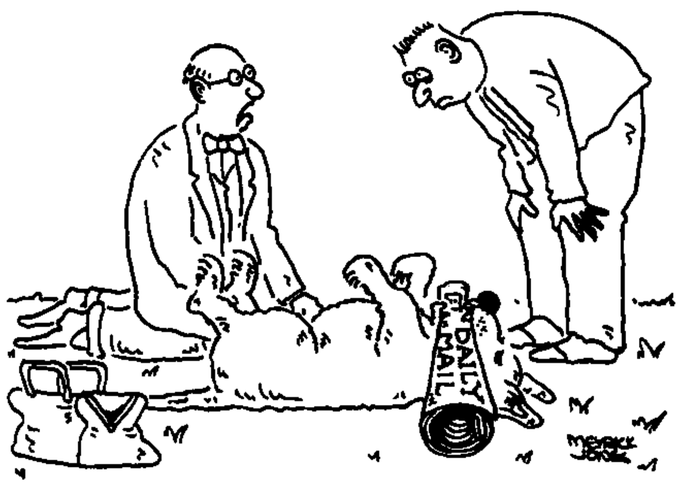
"Trees, not truth, are the first casualties of war." – The *Times*, on the glut of books about Iraq.

"Freer trade in agricultural products seems to be the first casualty of this almost-war." – *Sunday Times*.

"My address book is the first casualty of war." – Stephen Pollard, The *Times*.

"Comedy series *The Sketch Show* has become the 'first casualty of war' according to producer Steve Coogan." – *The Stage*.

"House prices are the first casualty of war." – The *Times*.



"Poison!"

IN THE TEAROOM

THE future of the NHS will be decided in the deserts of Iraq. If the sands run incarnadine, it's all up for health secretary Alan Milburn's foundation hospitals. If, on the other hand, the prime minister's "reckless" gamble pays off, he can take no prisoners when it comes to completing the still only half-baked modernization of the Labour party and the public services.

Tony Blair's fury with what he sees as a rabble of unreconstructed lefties in his party, who have been giving him such a hard time over Iraq and now threaten his health reforms, is impossible to overstate. "New" Labour zealots are hoping for a purge of anything that smells like old-time socialism on the Labour benches. They want a campaign pursued with the same vigour as de-Nazification in Germany after World War Two.

Why? Because the statist, bureaucratised NHS is slowly dying. No matter how many of Gordon's magic millions get spent on it, it just won't get any better. It may seem odd that a control-freak and bully like Milburn should emerge as the champion of a looser, freer model of public services, but this conviction may be the one genuine thing about him. The prospect of old Dobbo (who must surely share the blame for getting the NHS into this pickle in the first place) leading 100 or more sanctimonious rebels bleating about "two-tier" systems into the division lobby really makes him sick.

But then up pops Peter Hain, counselling magnanimity. Now is not the time to break butterflies on wheels. No less of a reformer at heart, the shrewd Hain advises a tilt – in substance as well as rhetoric – towards social justice, redistribution, Labour's core voters in the heartlands oop north and getting the unions back on side. And, for a while at least, sod the middle-class and reunite the parliamentary Labour party. Appease the left? Or crush it? Is Hain right, or are the Blairite fundamentalists? After Basra and Baghdad, the next big fight will be the battle for Tony's ear.

'Urquhart'

HOW reassuring to learn that despite soaring crime rates the home secretary still manages to deal in person with especially grave offences.

A group of small boys playing "knock down ginger" – the ancient practice of ringing doorbells and then running away – reckoned without the anger of a well-connected resident of South Street, Mayfair, who rang his chum David Blunkett to complain. As befits a crime of such magnitude, Blunkett passed it on to the commissioner of the Metropolitan police, who in turn instructed the local station superintendent, and thence through the duty sergeant the local community policeman, who had to visit the children's headmaster and give the young scamps a severe lecture on "zero tolerance".

ANTI-WAR protesters in Scotland will be turned away from outside the Labour party spring conference in Dundee because of fears that the ground could give way under the sheer weight of numbers.

The square in front of the conference venue, Caird Hall, is built over an underground car park. Protest coordinators at Scottish CND have been told that the paved area can only cope with a limited number of people before the weight causes subsidence.

Really?

THE Blair-Bush alliance seems to be drifting apart on Iran, which Bush has declared to be part of the "axis of evil".

While US secretary of state Colin Powell argues that Tehran is about to make atom bombs, Britain's export credits guarantee department (ECGD) is making frantic efforts to help British business win oilfield work in Iran.

At the end of February the ECGD announced a "faster ECGD service on Iranian oil contracts", which "gives UK exporters a boost". Any British company with up to $20m worth of work with the state-controlled National Iranian Oil Company can now get ECGD backing with less financial guarantees from the Iranians.

The decision follows a general increase in ECGD support for Iranian projects over the last year, including backing for a £21m deal for Snamprogetti to build a carbon monoxide plant for the state-owned National Petroleum Company announced last December. Presumably when the Americans turn their attention to Iran and start bombing there, plants like these can be rebuilt by American firms.

Bridgend Labour MP Win Griffiths led a debate in the Commons on Iranian human rights on 5 March, pointing out that "the picture is not good. Executions, floggings, stonings, maimings and arbitrary arrests all continue at a high level." Foreign office minister Denis MacShane defended the government's policy of "constructive engagement" with Iran, despite the lack of obvious progress. At no point did MacShane mention Britain's financial engagement with the country.

'Backbiter'

EDUCASHUN EDUCASHUN EDUCASHUN

THE conviction and three-month imprisonment of Alan Mercer, former headmaster of South Borough primary school at Maidstone, Kent, is the first clear sign that the "alteration" of exam papers can be a criminal offence. This will be of special interest to parents and teachers at Hanover primary school in Islington.

In 2001, after a dossier was submitted by the National Union of Teachers, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority annulled all Hanover school's "SATS" tests for English, maths and science. This shock decision plunged the "beacon" school to the bottom of the national league exam table.

No intelligible reason or explanation was given for this annulment by the private company, Cambridge Educational Associates (CEA), that runs Islington schools. CEA told the Times Educational Supplement last year (8 November 2002) that proper procedures had been followed and no disciplinary action was taken against the school's head at the time of the forgery, Cynthia Thumwood. She left the school in December 2001. She told the TES she had left because she was so upset by allegations against her over the forgeries. "I can categorically state," she said, "that I never did what I was accused of."

Hanover school now flourishes under a new head teacher. Ms Thumwood, under her married name Messom, still works as an enrolled inspector for OFSTED, the school standards inspectorate. Asked about the Hanover forgery, an OFSTED spokeswoman told the Eye: "It is not OFSTED's business to investigate allegations of forgery. The education authority (CEA) looked into the case against Ms Thumwood. We saw that no disciplinary action was taken against her and could only conclude that the case against her was not proved."

As long ago as July 2001, CEA employed an independent consultant to investigate allegations about malpractice in mental mathematics tests at Hanover for that year. No report by the consultant has been published or even commented on. The Eye asked CEA some questions about the annulments of so many exams in the school, and was rather surprised by the company's official reply, as follows:

"We can confirm that the tests were annulled, but we cannot make any further comment on this matter, because it is being investigated by the Metropolitan police". Now here's a funny thing. The press office of the Met, both centrally and locally, says that after very extensive inquiries they can find no reference to any investigation connected with Hanover school.

MORE about Nord Anglia, the private education company listed on the London stock exchange that prides itself on the administrative functions it can provide cheaply in schools – such as payroll, personnel and finance.

At the beginning of the school year the company snapped up some lucrative schools contracts in in the royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea in London. Alack a day, after only a few months, the governors at three primary schools – Park Walk, Christ Church and St Clements – have dispensed with the shambolic services provided by Nord Anglia.

The governors may be tempted to move on to another company, but they should watch out. One of them, Strictly Education, was formed with the help of disgruntled staff from, er, Nord Anglia. And competition between the three private education companies pitching for work in the borough works so well that all three quote exactly the same prices for exactly the same work!

TUC NEWS

SO FAREWELL, then, Robert "Bolly" Parker, erstwhile candidate to succeed John Edmonds as general-secretary of the GMB. The ambitious Bolly (*Eyes passim*) pulled out of the leadership race and quit as the union's Scottish regional secretary on 5 March after the GMB withdrew its support in two damaging employment tribunals in which Bolly was embroiled.

Given that the GMB makes such great play of its commitment to equal opportunities in the workplace, it was embarrassing (to say the least) that such a senior figure stood accused by female colleagues of sexual harassment in one case and sex discrimination in the other.

Parker's former PA Margaret McAvoy alleged that the harassment she had suffered included Parker exposing himself and commenting on the size of her breasts. The second case arose after another GMB officer, Mary Senior, claimed that Parker had victimised her after she agreed to give evidence on McAvoy's behalf.

After spending more than £250,000 of members' money on defending Parker, the GMB pulled the plug after Edmonds himself took the stand at Senior's tribunal and was forced to admit that Parker should have been sacked if he had, indeed, victimised a witness in a sex discrimination case, as Senior claimed.

Edmonds told Parker the union was washing its hands of him and he had no choice other than to resign with immediate effect. The GMB simultaneously agreed to a £50,000 out-of-court settlement with Mary Senior. A much larger payout is likely in the McAvoy case, currently adjourned until September, and could bring the total bill for the Bolly debacle to more than £1m.

Parker can console himself with the extraordinary generosity of Edmonds, who ordered Bolly's £45,000 salary to continue to be paid for the next 12 months, despite there being no contractual obligation to do so. Edmonds explained his decision by telling colleagues: "The GMB is a compassionate union."

'Blackleg'

HAWKWATCH

RICHARD PERLE, a defence adviser to George Bush, alarms British TV audiences with his hawkish views on Iraq and his unusual hairstyle. But his patriotism and love of America's constitution seem at odds with his threat to sue the *New Yorker* magazine in the courts of... London.

Perle is threatening veteran investigative writer Seymour Hersh with a libel suit after Hersh apparently revealed that Perle has business interests in the war on terror. Perle is reportedly threatening to sue in Britain, where it's easier to win cases, because of our lack of constitutional "First Amendment" protection of the freedom of the press.

Hersh revealed that Perle is on the board of Trireme Partners, a venture capital firm formed in November 2001. Hersh states that he has documents showing Trireme invests in "homeland security" and defence projects where "fear of terrorism" was increasing demand. Perle sits of the US defence policy board, helping to shape Bush's war on Iraq and terror.

Hersh also says Perle met with veteran arms broker Adnan Kashoggi and Saudi Businessman Harb Saleh al-Zuhair in Marseilles, apparently to raise funds for Trireme. Perle denies fundraising was the object of the meeting.

Perle is unquestionably on the board of a British firm, Autonomy Corporation, which is indeed profiting from the war on terror. This Cambridge-based computer firm recently won a huge contract from America's new department of homeland defence. Perle's company claims that "numerous federal agencies are already using Autonomy's automatic technology as a fundamental element of the US government's drive to combat terrorism".

Autonomy's computer system analyses words in text, tape and surveillance videos. The company claims its programme is for "uncovering suspicious activity by identifying patterns of meaning and relationships between pieces of data that may denote cause for concern." It claims its "application will enable government officials to monitor suspected terrorist groups and create a consolidated terrorist watch list."

Autonomy has also sold its security analysis software to several British police forces and recently announced a big contract with the "Italian government in the area of protecting the security of homeland territories." Other clients include the British ministry of defence, department of trade and industry and BAE Systems.

"Is this a fool's errand or a crusade?"

IN HIS diplomatic isolation over Iraq, Tony Blair at least has the consolation that 10 former eastern bloc countries support the US-UK stand. Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia all signed up for a pro-Bush statement last month; and plucky little Bulgaria has won a security council seat.

While French president Jacques Chirac denounced the statement as "infantile", Blair said: "They have as much right to speak up as Britain or France or any other member of the EU today". They were "perfectly entitled to express their views".

The statement did not just express these nations' views, however. It was drawn up by a former vice-president of arms firm Lockheed – a firm which will benefit enormously from any war in Iraq.

Bruce Jackson, a former military intelligence officer and Pentagon official, helped "initiate the text", according to officials at the Lithuanian embassy. And according to the *International Herald Tribune,* Jackson now runs an organisation called the Committee for Liberation of Iraq, which distributed the statement. None of the committee's four officers is Iraqi and only two of its 24 members are. The remainder are former American generals, CIA heads and James Hoffa, president of the Teamsters' Union.

A Latvian embassy official said it was Jackson who came up with the part of the statement that read: "Our countries understand the dangers posed by tyranny and the special responsibility of democracies to defend our shared values" – a sentiment Blair underlined for special praise.

From 1993 to 2002 Jackson was a vice-president at Lockheed Martin, whose weapons will be used extensively in Iraq. He made his contacts with eastern European Leaders in another role, however: as founder of the "committee on Nato", which encouraged the eastern European countries to join Nato. The same countries had to buy Lockheed weapons as a condition of joining Nato.

DOWN ON THE FARM

THE BBC's once respected *Farming Today* programme (formerly broadcast at 6am, but now scheduled at 5.45 to give even more airtime for Jim Naughtie to frame his legendary long questions) has been livened up (ie dumbed down) with two new presenters, Anna Hill and Miriam O'Reilly.

A good example was Anna Hill's recent effort on the Food Standards Agency's review of the "Over 30 Month Scheme" (OTMS), by which taxpayers have, since 1996, been shelling out nearly £3bn to pay for millions of cattle over 30 months old to be rendered down into powder to prevent them entering the food chain.

Farming Today's line is that the OTMS is A Good Thing. Older dairy cows are most likely to catch BSE, therefore the government is right to destroy them. So when the government talks about halting the OTMS, Anna Hill interviews the mother of a CJD victim, and asks her whether it is right that, just to save money, the government should allow over-30 month cattle back into the food chain, thus exposing consumers to the risk of dying from this horrible disease.

This is emotive stuff but should not allow *Farming Today* to overlook the inconvenient facts of the case. One is that the link between eating beef and catching vCJD has still not been scientifically proved. (The predicted epidemic never materialised and the figures are now on the wane). Another is that the OTMS was never recommended by any scientists in the first place. It was urged on Tory farming minister Douglas Hogg by the NFU and the supermarkets, at the height of the 1996 BSE hysteria, solely as a means to "restore consumer confidence" (to pay for which privilege around £120 has been removed from the wallet of every taxpayer in the country).

In farming terms, in fact, the real story is what will happen if the government does now decide to save money by scrapping the OTMS. Prior to 1996, there was still a large market in turning old dairy cows into cheap beef, once they had reached the end of their life as milkers. In particular, hundreds of thousands were shipped off to France. But that market has gone. The only thing which has kept dairy farmers afloat has been the OTMS, which at least provides a modest return for their old cows. Now, not only does the government seem to be considering scrapping that lifeline; the EU has also introduced its ban on farm burials.

So what on earth are farmers expected to do with their old milkers, if they can no longer sell them, bury them or even feed them to the hounds in the nearby kennels? The answer of course is to pay a fortune they cannot afford, to have the animals rendered down for incineration. Stand by for most of Britain's remaining dairy farmers to go out of business. This might even make a story for *Farming Today*.

'Muckspreader'

THERE was much wailing at the Bar last week when Russian billionaire oligarch Boris Berezovsky settled his long-running libel action against American billionaire oligarch Steve Forbes.

But instead of carrying detailed reports of this intriguing saga, many newspapers – including the *Guardian*, *Telegraph* and *FT* – accepted Boris' shilling and carried full-page cartoon advertisements. These made fun of *Forbes* magazine and suggested that the settlement was some sort of massive court-approved victory for Berezovsky. Nothing, as his lawyers Carter Fuck are prone to say, could be further from the truth. For a start the statement in open court made clear that *Forbes* was not paying Boris any damages or a single penny of his legal costs. Nor was it even giving him an apology. As every libel aficionado knows, these are signals of a plaintiff's climbdown.

Seven years ago, under the headline *Godfather of the Kremlin*, *Forbes* magazine published an article accusing Berezovsky and a side-kick named Glouchkov of massive Yeltsin-era corruption, including the siphoning of millions of dollars from Aeroflot through a Swiss company they had formed called "Forus" (For us – *geddit?*). Last week *Forbes* accepted it was wrong to characterise Boris as a mafia boss involved in murder – in particular the killing of a rival TV tycoon. It said it had only intended to suggest that Berezovsky had been included in an inconclusive police investigation into the death. It also accepted Grouchkov had not been convicted in 1982 of theft of state property.

Glouchkov is now in prison in Moscow on trial for the very offence of Aeroflot fraud that *Forbes* magazine alleged against him and Boris.

The British home office refused to confirm or deny reports in the Russian press that Moscow has also asked for Boris's extradition.

ADULT EDUCATION

THE department of work and pensions (DWP) is planning legal action to reclaim a £1.4m grant it made to a "virtual university" website which is now broadcasting porn.

The site, www.virt-u.com, was to have provided education and training for small businesses, including online courses. It was given a European social fund grant in 2000. However, the site finally collapsed in 2002 after two years of bitter rows between all the participants – which at one point saw the web developer Fontal sue Enimm, the consultancy heading up the project.

Several universities that helped devise the courses, including Brighton and Bournemouth, remain thousands of pounds out-of-pocket.

Unable to resist the pun, a US porn site has grabbed the web address and is now providing an entirely different kind of education. Anyone in search of the virtual university now encounters Sophy inviting them to: "Watch me play with myself on my live webcam." A DWP spokesman told the *Eye* it was currently seeking legal advice on how to get its money back.

EYE TV

Fimbles (CBeebies)

FOR several years now, many parents of small children have harboured a secret fantasy: to go to a party, to meet someone who claimed to have invented the Tweenies, and to stab that person with a fork. The person responsible is doubtless a multi-millionaire by now, and travels the world with burly minders who can spot nutters from 50 paces, but it would be a small revenge for the deep cynicism that now characterises TV for the Very Young. Which is where the Fimbles come in.

Again, unless you have children under five, chances are you won't have seen the *Fimbles*, and thus will be envied by all of us who have. "Every girl, every boy/Come and open up your eyes/There's a world right here/Full of wonder and surprise" are the words sung wetly over the opening credits, but tragically they are only talking about Fimble Valley, where all this takes place.

The Fimbles themselves are huge multi-pastelled woollen hippos who, like most children's TV characters these days, have eaten all the pies. There's a yellow-and-green-striped one, who supports Norwich City, and a claret-and-blue-striped one, who favours West Ham. Baby Pom is green and pink, and even wetter than the other two. Also living in the Valley are Rocket, an unfunny blue frog, and Roly, a purple-and-green Welsh raccoon, whose job is to read the daily story.

Possibly of greatest interest to future TV historians is Bessie, a vast fat pink bird who may remind older viewers of Barbara Cartland. With impressive disregard for the laws of physics, this ungainly creature flaps her tiny wings incredibly hard and somehow just manages to stay airborne, also like Barbara Cartland. Then she lands on an orange polystyrene rock (bought in bulk from *Star Trek*) and starts talking like Hyacinth Bouquet. Two minutes into each programme, you already have a splitting headache.

"The one we've never heard of was quite good..."

Or perhaps that's the idea. There's certainly something a little relentless about the *Fimbles*. As with the *Tweenies*, the actors voicing these characters appear to have been encouraged to improvise and fill in, with a result that no one ever stops talking or chuckling or making silly noises for more than a split-second. Add to this a garish palette of dayglo primary colours and killer secondaries and you have sensory bombardment. To ease the pain the writers have cleverly excised plot or incident from the programme. All that happens is that one of the Fimbles gets the Fimbling Feeling. Their fingers start twitching, their noses start wrinkling, their topknots start twitching, and on nearby trees scary penis-shaped orchids start bobbing around. (Like most dreamworlds, this one is only a blink of an eye away from your worst nightmares.)

After the Fimbling Feeling, the Fimbles find something. One day last week, it was an apron. The day after, it was a willow pattern plate. Would Fimbo drop the plate? No, as it happened, but it was a close run thing.

Teletubbies, as all parents appreciate, was original, cleverly thought out and full of charm. Even the *Tweenies* have a certain energy. But *Fimbles* just feels like a 20-minute ad for Fimbles soft toys and accessories. So why is it the flagship of the BBC's exciting new CBeebies operation? Not for creative or imaginative reasons, but because Fimbles fills a crucial demographic gap in pre-school viewers. It's for children who are too old for the *Teletubbies* and too young for the *Tweenies*. That's the only reason it exists. And the reason it's on twice a day on BBC1 and BBC2 and 49,034,829 times a day on digital.

'Couch Potato'

MEDIA NEWS

AMONG those most eager for military action in the Gulf are the armies of hacks camping out in northern Kuwait ready to "cover" the war.

The BBC alone has 30 people "embedded" in British units; and as the *Eye* went to press there was still nothing much for them to do.

The most indolent are happy with the photo opportunities eagerly arranged by British army PR bods: Challenger tanks moving around swivelling their guns at film crews; Royal Marines fixing bayonets and practising their "killing faces"; etc: bored viewers have seen little else so far.

John Sopel even managed to film our "secret weapon", called "the fox" – so secret that the army allowed him to film both inside and out.

Others at least tried something different. ITV attempted to cover Lt General Jeff Conway's big speech to the troops. It ran all the stock shots of tanks but none of the general's actual speech. Why so? "Military restrictions prevent us from reporting his words."

On Sky News Lisa Holland tried to get inside the mind of the squaddie: "Of course this is not a scientific analysis," she pointed out, "but they believe that Saddam is a bad man."

LAST summer BBC Radio Five Live sent Nicky Campbell and Victoria Derbyshire to Japan and Korea to bring "colour" to their world cup coverage by talking to people in studios here in the UK.

Now Peter Allen is "holed up" in a Sheraton Hotel in Kuwait. Once again he spends much of his time talking to fellow correspondents in the UK and has even conducted an interview with a sub post master in Cumbria from his lonely desert outpost.

O·B·N·K

As the victorious major hugged his wife, Mr Tarrant exclaimed on the tape: "Unbelievable! I am so proud to have met you. I am so proud to have met this guy who is an amazing human being."

The Times

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: Which South American country has borders with ten others?

Contestant: China.

Robinson: Which city was chosen to host the first Chinese Grand Prix in 2007?

Contestant: Tokyo.

Robinson: Sri Lanka is situated to the south-east of which Asian country?

Contestant: South Africa.

Robinson: What is the capital of Iraq?

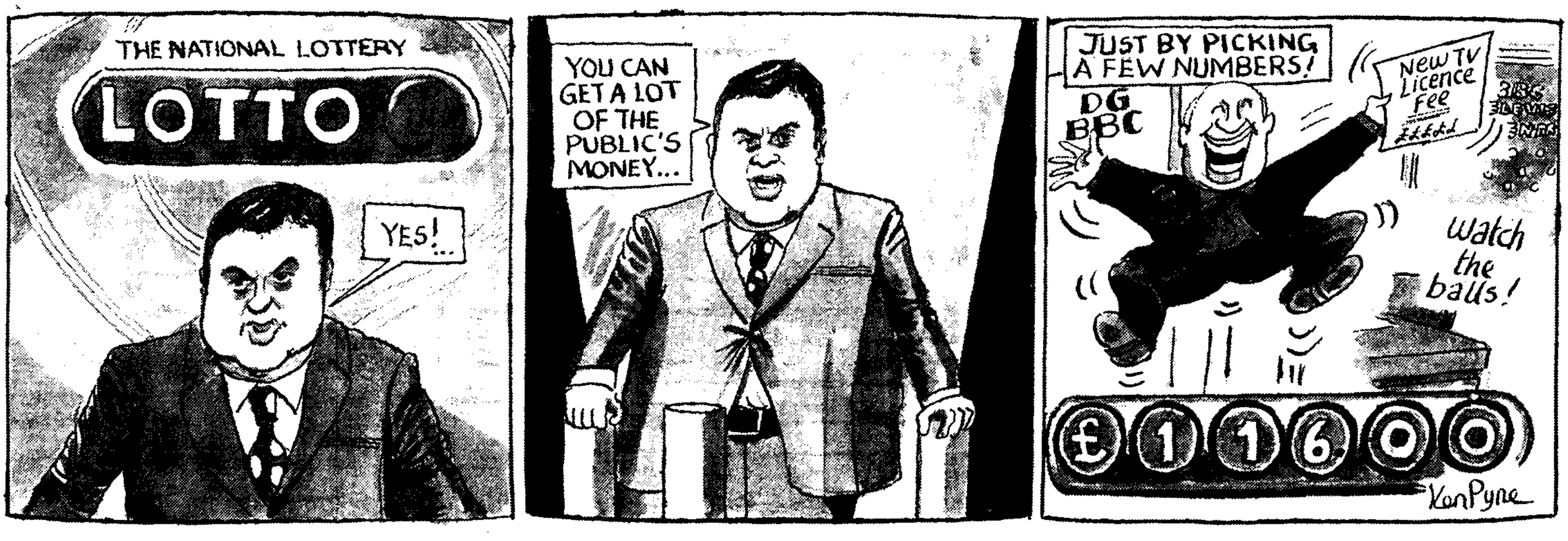
Contestant: Iran.

Robinson: The equator divides the world into how many hemispheres?

Contestant: Three.

AN EARLY contender for Greg Dyke's next list of programmes the BBC should be proud of is currently being hatched among the team that used to produce *Tomorrow's World*.

"This is a serious request", began an email to all London staff from Stephen Maud, an assistant producer in the specialist factual department. "Following the successful response to last week's request for hair lice, we need more live specimens for an experiment next week. Delightful I know, but do you or someone close to you have crabs? Confidentiality and treatment guaranteed."



WHY is BBC business editor Jeff "Essex Boy" Randall being so quiet about Philip Green, the porcine bigot who runs British Home Stores?

In the past Randall has seldom missed a chance to mention Green, telling viewers that he was the quickest billionaire in history and running a series of adulatory interviews with the retailing genius. The problem for Randall is that the wheels have come off since the *Guardian* decided to do some ferreting around in the BhS accounts.

Green is not a man who likes being questioned about accounts or any truths apart from his version; and he reacted by describing the *Guardian*'s City editor, Paul Murphy, as a "stupid Irish cunt" who "couldn't read".

This is a classic Green tactic. He has previously tried it on with (among countless others) David Hellier at the *Independent*, John Jay at the *Sunday Telegraph*, Dominic Prince at the *Sunday Express* and Damien McCrystal at the *Evening Standard*. (Quite where Green got McCrystal's home telephone number from remains a mystery; surely not from McCrystal's old boss, one J.Randall.)

His constant refrain is that "Jeff Randall is the only decent journalist among you lot." What he means is that Randall is the only hack who unquestioningly laps up everything he says.

Now, in what is seen as a damage limitation exercise, Randall is putting it around that he has fallen out with Green since the outburst against Murphy. This would seem highly unlikely: the years of tirelessly promoting Green in return for stories about his north London friends have created one of the cosiest relationships between a businessman and a BBC journalist ever seen.

Randall has never broadcast or written a word that is at all critical or even inquiring of Green. In the early 1990s, from his berth as City editor of the *Sunday Times*, Randall tirelessly promoted Green and his clapped out company Amber Day – much to the annoyance of readers who lost their shirts on Amber Day shares. When he went on to edit *Sunday Business* there was more shameless promotion of his old friend. Following Green's bid for Sears, Randall was at the victory party afterwards. And, at Green's lavish 50th birthday party in Cyprus last year, the *arslikhan* speeches included one by a certain BBC business editor.

Do BBC viewers and listeners deserve more from their business reporting than a former City PR man reciting as fact what captains of industry and spivs tell him? Greg Dyke clearly thinks not: it was he who personally appointed "Essex Boy", at a salary of £250,000 and with a brief to make BBC News more "business friendly". In that, at least, he's certainly succeeded.

INTERACTIVITY is the new buzzword for television. And if your viewers aren't willing to interact with you – because, say, the show is presented by Richard Littlejohn – you can always just pretend there's someone watching.

Littlejohn's twice-weekly talk show on Sky News features regular spots where sidekick Clare Gorham reads out emails sent by viewers reacting to the various topics discussed on the show. Mostly these consist of comments along the lines of "you're quite right, string 'em up, it's the only language they understand". Some, however, show unusual insight – or perhaps foresight would be a better word.

"I'm sick to death of this political correctness gone mad", was the view of Paula from Sandringham on 4 March, following an interview with a Muslim cleric about education guidelines. "We had this a few years ago when the blackboard changed to the whiteboard." Strangely, the text of Paula's email, which appeared on screen, said something rather different. "I'm sick to death of all these celebrity stories – newspapers publish too many of them."

Gorham followed up with another email, this time from Tony in Wrexham. "It's refreshing to hear from a Muslim who understands that certain people in ivory towers get to tell ordinary people what to say and think." Again, the text of the email from Tony in Wrexham which appeared on screen was rather differrent: "It's refreshing to hear from a glamour girl who isn't interested in having illicit affairs and boring us with the details."

What on earth could he be on about? A clue was provided by Littlejohn's trail for what was coming up after the break – an item on celebrity culture, including an interview with a glamour girl who wasn't interested in having illicit affairs and boring us with the details!

The "exclusive phone poll" which closed the programme revealed that 85 percent of respondents thought we should torture terrorist suspects. In real terms, that must be nearly three-and-a-half production assistants.

IMAGINE Channel 5's delight at pinching the week's most eagerly anticipated football match from under the noses of the BBC – the UEFA cup quarter final between Celtic and Liverpool.

It paid out a massive £2m to secure the game. So it was a shame that it got a little over-excited on the evening itself. Just as thousands of Celtic fans were returning home, the Channel 5 continuity announcer reminded them that after Jonathan Pearce's *Football Night* there would be an opportunity to watch the "Rangers versus Liverpool" game again in full. In coming weeks can we look forward to in-depth Channel 5 coverage of the war against Iran?

STANDARDS of accuracy are reaching new heights on UK History, where a short filler on the sinking of the German battleship Bismarck on 12 March aired footage first of the Scharnhorst and then of the Graf Spee that a researcher had mistaken for the famous warship.

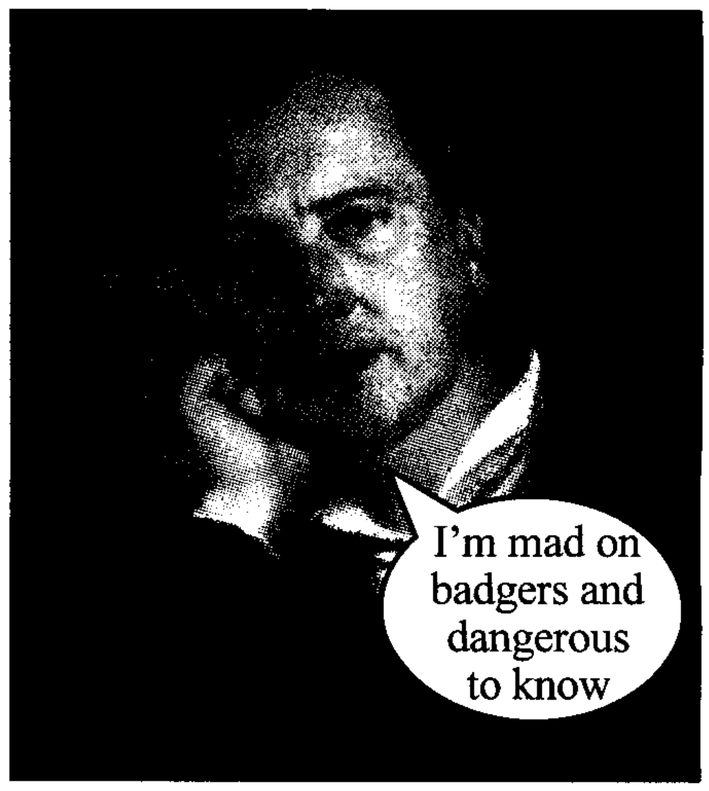
Pictures of American warships then appeared, apparently steaming after the Bismarck. As any fule no, it was the Royal Navy wot eventually cornered and sunk the Bismarck.

EVERY few months street prostitution in Leith becomes the subject of news coverage.

When it does, the BBC's Scottish news outlets dig out the same, tired footage of a single prostitute standing in front of a sign that says "Speedy Hire" (geddit?!) Cynical viewers wonder how much extra business this endlessly repeated footage has brought the woman in question.

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore



Lord ByRon Davies

LUVVIES

"I want to be exposed to all of humanity. I want all of humanity to be reflected in me. I want to know what it is like to be human."

MARTIN SHEEN
Sunday Telegraph Magazine

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

ROBBIE WILLIAMS at Knobworth 2nd August £65
Coach & ticket
Omega Holiday ABTA V4782
Peterborough Evening Telegraph reader offer

THE NEOPHILIACS

"Underwear… is the new jewellery." – Carole Caplin, *Mail on Sunday*.

"Repression is belatedly fashionable, even sexy. The new 'black' of the mental health world." – Barbara Ellen, *Observer*.

"Mainliners Working Women's Clinic says crack is the new pimp." – *Streatham Guardian*.

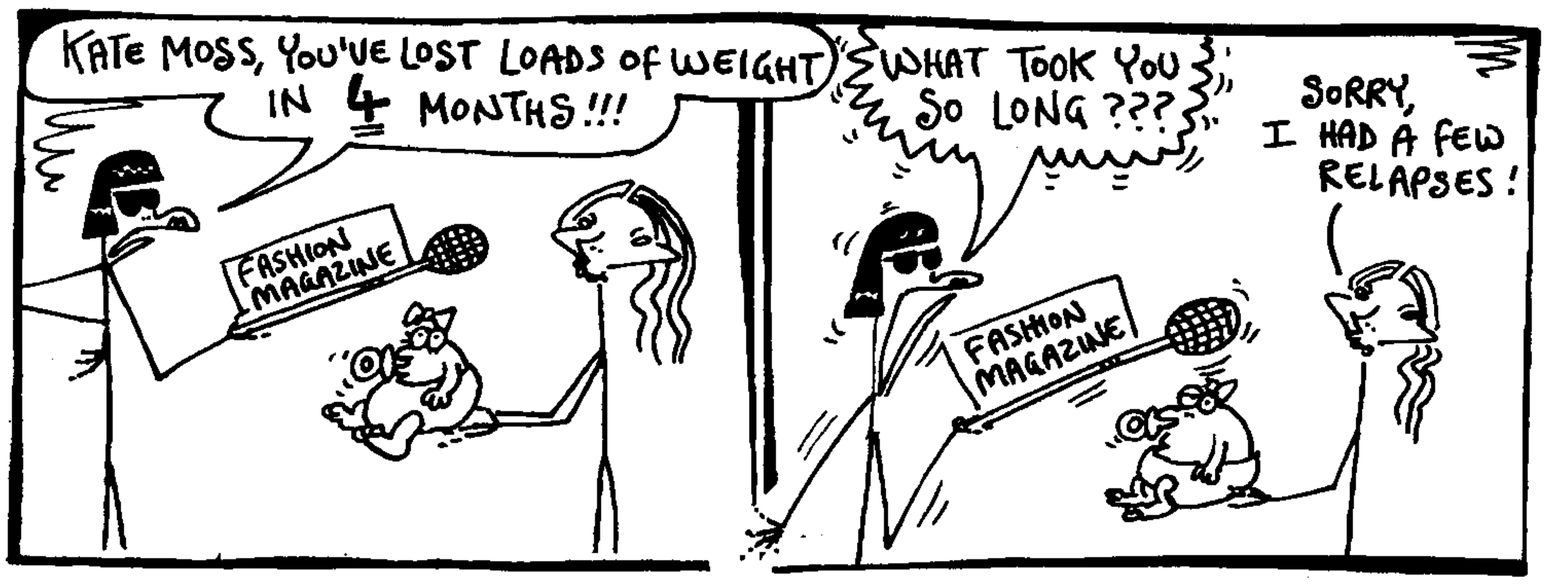
"Is slander the new libel?" – BBC News.

"Is history the new reality TV?" – *Sunday Express*.

"Is the North the new South?" – *Local Government News*.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


KATE MOSS, YOU'VE LOST LOADS OF WEIGHT IN 4 MONTHS!!!
FASHION MAGAZINE
WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG???
SORRY, I HAD A FEW RELAPSES!
FASHION MAGAZINE

SIGNAL FAILURES

SRA in denial

NEW light has been shed on Britain's bizarre fetish for shovelling wads of money into the coffers of failed train operators while cutting services and investment because of cash shortages.

Richard Horton, the "strategic" rail authority's director in charge of new franchising policy, was asked at a passengers' conference why the SRA wasn't following Network Rail's example of bringing failed contracts in house (NR has taken control of track maintenance west of London). He replied that the SRA has no power to take over bungled franchises and run the trains itself.

In fact that power was spelled out to the SRA in February 2001, in ministerial directions which said the SRA "must maintain a contingency plan" for stepping in. The SRA must also ensure it has managers with operational and safety experience available. Presumably Richard Bowker, chairman *and* chief executive of the SRA, forgot to show Horton that guidance or tell him about the contingency plan (regularly reviewed before Bowker's arrival). So Horton has been designing a franchise policy that invites private companies to hold taxpayers over a barrel again.

The most obvious case for the SRA to step in was, and is, the Virgin West coast franchise, where reality is light years from the sci-fi business plan used by Richard Branson to win the franchise. The figures don't stack up on Virgin Cross-Country either: it needs to double its passenger numbers using trains that are often severely overcrowded already. Last year Virgin was allocated an extra £106m subsidy, Connex £58m extra and National Express £115m – with loads more to come.

Taking back a franchise would be fairly simple, since most staff, including middle management, drivers and guards, would remain in situ. The SRA can transfer rolling-stock leases from a failed franchisee to itself. These changes would be paid for out of the bond which every franchisee has raised as surety against such an outcome.

When an MP asked in the Commons if the SRA had evaluated the cost of running franchises itself, the unconvincing reply was that the SRA (ie Bowker) had "satisfied itself that the costs of any alternative scenario would at least be equal to or greater than the proposed subsidy increase". If Bowker isn't prepared even to threaten the ultimate sanction, the second round of franchising will be infected with the recklessness that marked the first. The subsidy bill will continue to rise as operators come back for more.

● A 'customer' on First Great Western's Cathedrals Express service to Worcester surveyed the range of soft drinks on display in the buffet car (Coca Cola, Sprite, Fanta or Lilt) and chose to order a Sprite. 'I'm sorry, Sir, Sprite is only for first-class customers', revealed the barman.

'Dr B. Ching'

Warballs

"Show producer Gil Cates said the Oscars ceremony would go ahead even if the US launches a war against Iraq, but that the tone of the show would 'reflect reality'. Cates warned Oscar winners that the orchestra would strike up to drown out their acceptance speech if they exceeded their 45-second allotment, named more than five people they wanted to thank or produced a prepared script. 'I know they are harsh measures, but they are necessary,' he said."

– Guardian.

"Hostilities may see demand for luxury stationery increase as people turn to the contemplative act of letter-writing."

– Financial Times.

THE COMMUTERS
WE'VE ORGANISED THIS GROUP TO FORM A POWERFUL VOICE FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN THE RAILWAYS...
RAIL PASSENGER ACTION GROUP
OK. FIRST ITEM ON THE AGENDA
RAIL PASSENGER ACTION GROUP
...APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCES
I'M STUCK ON A TRAIN!
ME TOO!
GRIZELDA

DOING THE ROUNDS

THE NHS modernisation board's annual report has found modest progress in the service, but hardly enough to justify the 21 percent increase in funding under new Labour.

Acute activity has increased by just 2 percent, there are now a record 1.17 managers per bed and the audit commission has found "inaccuracies" in the waiting list data from a third of all trusts. Meanwhile, GP numbers have increased by only 0.7 percent and one in four consultants are threatening to leave the NHS if they aren't offered an acceptable employment contract. So where's all the money going?

Expenditure on heart drugs has certainly increased, although the benefits of this are over-emphasised and will only be apparent in the longer term. But it is the culture of excessive target setting, over-regulation and inspection that is wasting most time and money.

As one nurse puts it: "I was appointed as a clinical nurse manager (one of Tony Blair's Modern Matrons) at a West Midlands mental health NHS trust in April last year. Since then the trust has been inspected or assessed by the following bodies: The Commission for Health Improvement, The Mental Health Act Commission, Investors in People, The Clinical Negligence Scheme for Trusts, a Patient Environment Assessment Team and an Improving Working Lives Assessment Team. We spend all our time preparing for, or responding to such inspections because our bosses' corporate managerialism requires that we chase the next 'badge' to put on the Trust letterhead. I shall leave you to imagine who gets the blame when these awards are not achieved and where patient care is on the list of priorities. Please do not print my name."

LABOUR's obsession with "access" (nurses on the phone rather than the wards, walk-in centres, seeing a GP within 48 hours whether you need to or not) may also be counter-productive. An NHS Direct employee has written to the *Eye* with his concerns:

"The NHS Direct central development team is spending around £70,000 a month on travel and subsistence. They go first class 'because we need to work on the train', unlike the rest of us who manage at a table in standard class. The bizarre network system they have devised means some sites are at opposite sides of the country and meet centrally in London at horrendous expense and inconvenience for the myriad of meetings that this strange NHS hybrid organisation has.

"The central team have so far failed to deliver on almost every project they have undertaken, the CAS system used to triage patients is not fit for the purpose and needs endless tinkering. It does not help GP practices when NHSD front ends the calls as the system is set too safe and creates extra work for the GP's. The virtual call centre promised for years has still not materialised to enable callers to be answered within a reasonable time and have a central record. It is not the nurses' fault, who do all they can with an imperfect system, the fault lies with the central gravy train team who are not delivering but are having a nice comfortable time failing."

MEANWHILE, for patients who need treatment from the many Cinderella NHS services, the outlook seems as bleak as ever. Neil Matthews was referred for community physiotherapy in Canterbury and was told he'd have to wait 24 weeks. But he was one of the lucky ones – as Penny Slade, acting head of physiotherapy services at Ashford Primary Care Trust explains:

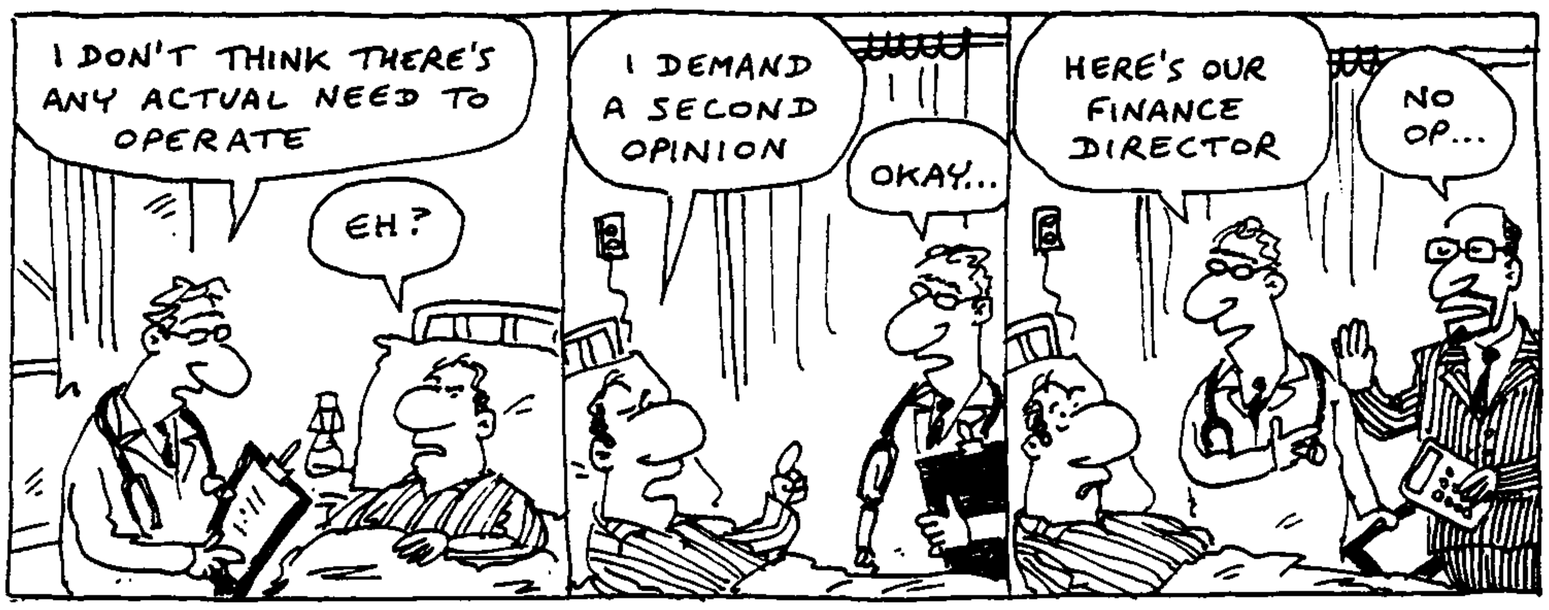
"Unfortunately, some patients will not be placed on the waiting list and will therefore not be offered treatment. If a patient experiences an acute flare up of their condition, then the GP can re-refer… these will be treated as an urgent case. This may hold up treatment for those patients who are currently on the waiting list, however, by not accepting non-urgent cases, this will enable Physiotherapy staff to 'catch-up' and treat patients on the existing waiting list."

Refusing to even see patients referred for NHS treatment is an ingenious way of hitting that waiting list target. Other examples would be gratefully received.

'M.D.'

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY



ROTTEN BOROUGHS

COME BRIBE WITH ME

ARE Labour councils wholehearted in their commitment to recycling? If it's a case of putting council taxpayers' money back into the bank account of the Labour party, the answer is most certainly yes.

In 2001-2002 Manchester Airport Group (MAG) — which is wholly owned by the mainly Labour authorities in its hinterland — made donations of £270,000 to political parties and members of parliament. More than half of this was in the form of free car park passes for MPs. As in the case of BAA (*Eye* 1075), Manchester Airport claims such donations are not "political" because they are offered to MPs of all parties. The logic appears to be that bribery is OK so long as you bung everyone.

Another £66,748 went straight into the national coffers of political parties — £60,000 to Labour and the remainder to the Lib Dems. On 30 August last year Labour received £30,000 towards the Blackpool party conference dinner at which Bill Clinton was the star attraction. Another £30,000 was donated on 8 October.

Of the 10 local authorities which own Manchester Airport, two are Lib Dem controlled (Oldham and Stockport), each owning 5 percent. Seven Labour councils — Bolton, Bury, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan — own a further 5 percent each. Labour-controlled Manchester city council owns the remaining 55 percent.

So control of MAG is divided thus: 90 percent Labour, 10 percent Lib Dem. Of the £66,748 dished out by MAG, the Lib Dems received £6,748 (10.1 per cent), and the Labour party £60,000 (89.9 per cent). How splendidly even-handed!

● **CONCERNED that people in Leeds are becoming couch potatoes, the Labour city council has launched a "Let's go Leeds!" campaign to encourage them to take more exercise. As part of the promotion it is giving away half-price swimming vouchers for people to use before or after work or at lunchtimes. Most commendable. But what a pity the city council has also decided to close Leeds' only city centre public swimming pool.**

UNDER THE TABLE

MORE on the case of Geoff Monks, who was prosecuted by East Northants district council (ENDC) for food safety offences in 1999.

Eye 1075 told how Kettering magistrates imposed record fines and costs totalling £27,500 after a piece of mouldy ham was allegedly found in the kitchen of Monks's pub, the Snooty Fox. The prosecution arose after local solicitor Jenny Lawrence claimed to have become ill with food poisoning after eating at the pub — coincidentally after having been barred by Monks for creating a scene over a mistake in her bill.

Monks, whose business and health were ruined by the case, has always maintained that this prosecution — and cases brought against two other pubs he owned — was out of all proportion and that the council appeared to be pursuing a vendetta against him. But why?

ENDC's chief executive Roger Heath, whose decision it had been to prosecute Monks, took early retirement with a package that cost council taxpayers some £800,000. The only reason given for his departure was that it was "in the interests of the efficient exercise of the Council's functions to facilitate the Council's Modernisation Agenda of the Council" [*sic*]. So keen were councillors to see the back of Heath that his successor, Graham Wise, was appointed from within the council without the job being advertised. Alas Wise had health problems and himself took early retirement, with an enhanced "package", natch, just 18 months later. What is wrong with this council?

PISSED OFF

LIVERPOOL city council, which had the dubious distinction of the highest council tax in the land, has enjoyed a few years' respite from rate rises — until this year, when bills are set to rise by 5 percent.

Council tax rates have been kept down thanks to the ruthless "modernising agenda" of chief executive David Henshaw (*Eyes passim*) — a man whose "name has become a byword for cutting-edge council management", according to a fawning reference in the *Grauniad* last week. "Cutting" certainly is the operative word. Care home provision is among current targets and even the municipal *pissoirs* are being closed, the better to be sold off and converted into wine bars.

Economies do not extend, however, to the salaries of the council's senior managers. Henshaw has recently wangled a "golden handcuffs" deal which will see his pay soar to £173,000 a year, plus a 10 percent "performance-related pay" bonus. With rises for 27 executive and assistant executive directors, the annual wages bill for the fat cats will be more than £2.5m. Meanwhile other council workers must make do with 3.5 percent.

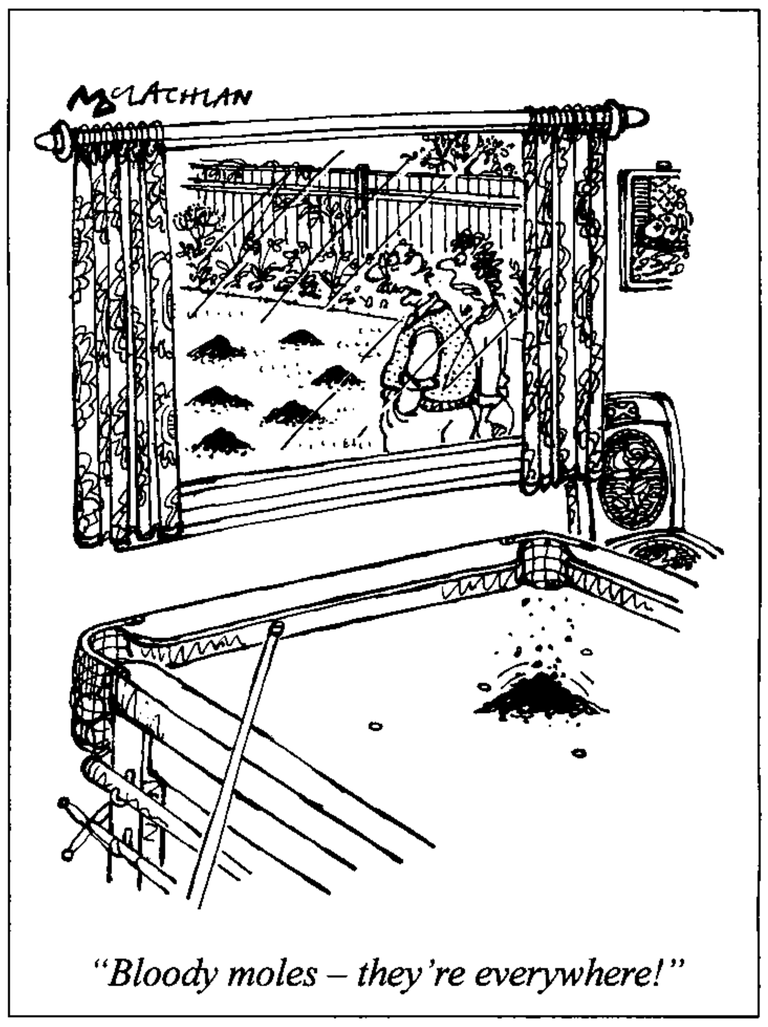
HUGHES SORRY NOW

THE Lib Dems' tenuous control of the London borough of Southwark hangs precariously on the outcome of an investigation by the Standards Board of England into one of their councillors, Margaret Ambrose.

The inquiry follows a complaint by Labour group leader Ian Wingfield that Ambrose, who at the time of her election last May was chair of the Heygate tenants association (HTA), failed to resign from that position until six weeks after becoming a councillor, thereby breaching the local government code of conduct and the association's own rules.

The board has been examining claims that poor financial controls enabled Ambrose to receive £1,000 for phone expenses in one year without having to provide any bills; that she failed to provide receipts to people who paid in cash for hire of a hall, and that lack of a tendering process had enabled the councillor to award a £1,700 cleaning contract to, er, herself.

Should Ambrose have to step down as a councillor, thereby causing a by-election, the Lib Dems could well lose their majority of one over Labour. Local MP Simon Hughes is not happy.



"Bloody moles – they're everywhere!"

OPEN SPACES

HAVING won the battle for access to the countryside via introduction of the countryside and rights of way act 2000, ramblers didn't reckon on a new set of barriers going up.

Fearing walkers, blackberry pickers and dog walkers, English Nature, the government agency charged with protecting our flora and fauna, is behind controversial plans to fence off thousands of acres of commonland for "conservation grazing". The aim is to recreate a heathland habitat that has not existed for centuries.

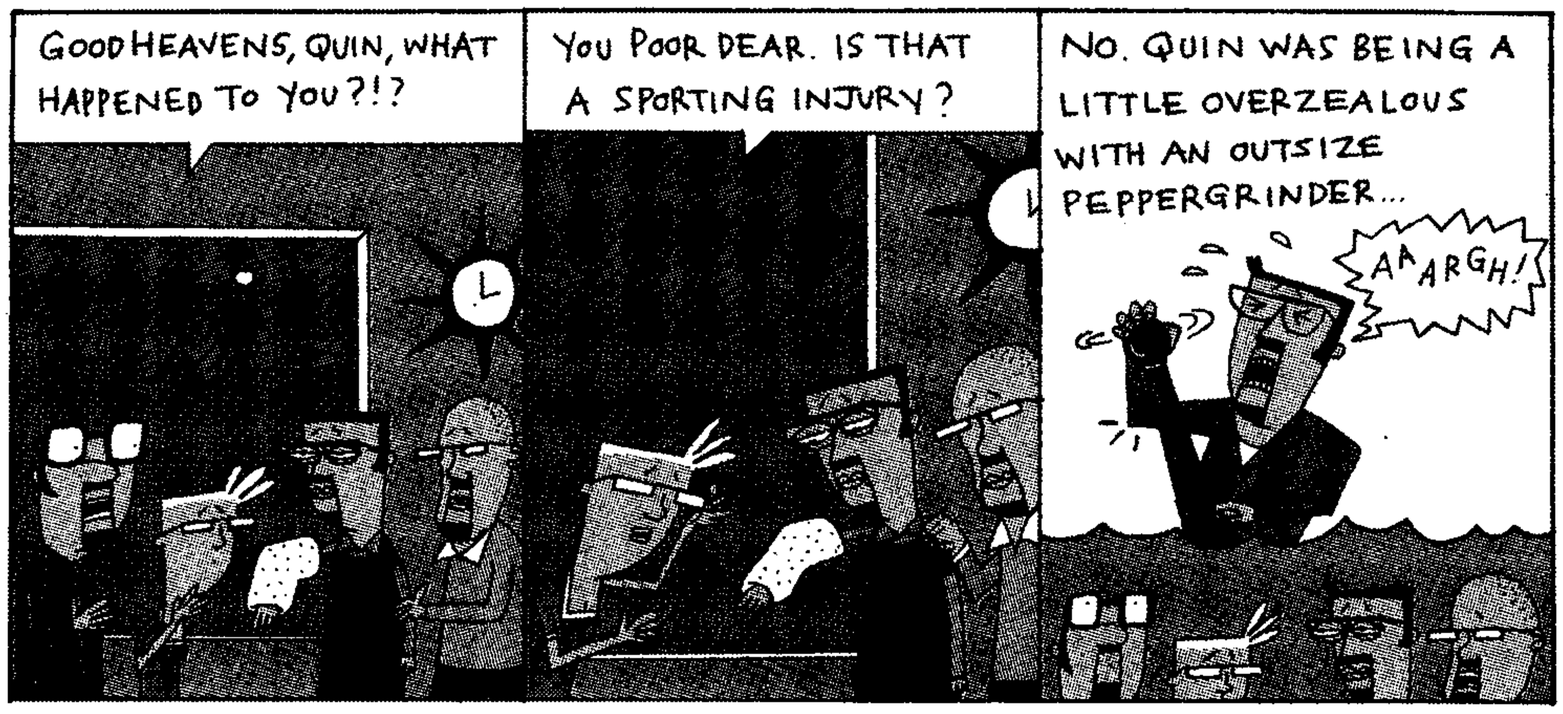
At Odiham Common, Hampshire, for example, some woodland has already been destroyed. Part of it has been fenced and cattle grazing has been introduced. Now the common owner, Hart council, along with English Nature, wants to fence off the whole area.

At a recent public inquiry they met stiff opposition from the Open Spaces Society, local residents and Odiham parish council – all anxious to preserve the existing habitat and the right to enjoy it. Similar scenarios are being played out around the country and another public inquiry has just finished at Wetley Moor, Staffordshire.

English Nature has wide powers to protect woodlands, heathlands, fauna and flora, and can close hundreds of acres of public access land on behalf of, say, rare natterjack toads or orchids. But according to the Open Spaces Society and Bob Milton of the Defend our Commons campaign, it is hard to see the conservation merits of ugly fencing on open, beautiful commons.

The showdown looks set for later this year when another public inquiry will examine plans to fence off Wisley in Surrey. Wisley has a particular resonance for those fighting to retain land for public access. It was specifically saved from enclosure in 1869 by a parliamentary select committee.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER


GOOD HEAVENS, QUIN, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?!?
YOU POOR DEAR. IS THAT A SPORTING INJURY?
NO. QUIN WAS BEING A LITTLE OVERZEALOUS WITH AN OUTSIZE PEPPERGRINDER...
AAARGH!

NOOKS and CORNERS

THERE was a time when the railways demonstrated a civic sense as well as being public-spirited. This was certainly true of the 1920s when the new Southern Railway invested in electrifying its system and in building smart, dignified new stations.

Good examples are at Margate and Ramsgate, where the new stations are urbane monumental Classical buildings, rather American in character, with large booking halls. Both were by the future famous modernist Maxwell Fry, who ghosted for the Southern Railway's chief architect in the 1920s.

Hastings Central Station is in this tradition, although it was probably designed after Fry had left the Southern. Opened in 1931, it is of brick and reinforced concrete. An octagonal "booking concourse" lit by a big lunette window reconciles the junction between the station forecourt and the platforms. It is a fine thing, which gives an appropriate civic dignity to a rather messy and rundown part of Hastings. So Network Rail – or whatever Railtrack is now called – wants to replace it with an exciting new station opening off one side of the station forecourt. Then it will demolish the existing (unlisted) station building to make way for a car park. Why?

This proposed vandalism has elicited protests from David Mackay of MBM Architects of Barcelona (Catalan architects are quite the thing in Hastings as well as Edinburgh), who has been busy preparing a "Masterplan" for Hastings (a town full of good things but which certainly needs help). Hastings Station, as a dignified and useful piece of railway architecture, was to play a crucial role in that plan.

As Mackay writes: "In the ongoing development of our Masterplan… we are counting on this station to enhance the forecourt of the station and to accommodate a new civic or educational use for the future university." Perhaps an even better plan would be to restore and modernise it as a railway station, the use for which it was so well designed. Whichever, it does seem absurd that Hastings council should employ a distinguished architect to make the best of the town only to find Network Rail doing away with one of the assets he proposes to use.

Like Fry's buildings on the Isle of Thanet, Hastings Station should be listed and retained.

ANOTHER good inter-war station under threat, albeit from mutilation rather than destruction, is at Leamington Spa, which was rebuilt by the Great Western Railway in 1937-39 partly with government assistance to relieve unemployment.

The new building, faced in Portland stone, was designed in modernistic-Classical, ostensibly by P.E. Culverhouse, the GWR's chief architect. The best interior is the station buffet, which was panelled in walnut in that contemporary "jazz modern" manner that John Betjeman, blessed founder of this column, so disliked at the time.

And now it is to be spoiled. Select Service Partners, to whom Network Rail awarded the franchise for the buffet, wants to alter it to make it part of its "themed" chain of buffets, this one to be renamed Pumpkin. Surely the best and most intelligent theme to exploit at Leamington is the surviving Art Deco character of the building, especially with the big "Deco" exhibition about to open at the Victoria & Albert Museum.

Like Hastings, Leamington Spa Station ought to be listed and protected.

FINALLY, a medieval church rather than a 20th century railway station: St Mary's at Slaugham in Sussex, which has been minding its own business for some nine centuries. Now the rector, the Rev Gary Simmons, and his hon. assistant minister, the Rev Kenneth Habershon MBE, wish to bring it kicking and screaming into the 21st century.

Stage one is to build a toilet block against the south-facing outside wall, abutting the Covert Chapel (built in 1613) and thus enhancing the amenity of the old churchyard (and, as it happens, the conservation area in which the church stands). This bold intervention is designed by architect Nicholas Rowe. The closing date for objections was 21 February, but Mid Sussex council waved

the thing through on 13 February regardless of feeling in the village.

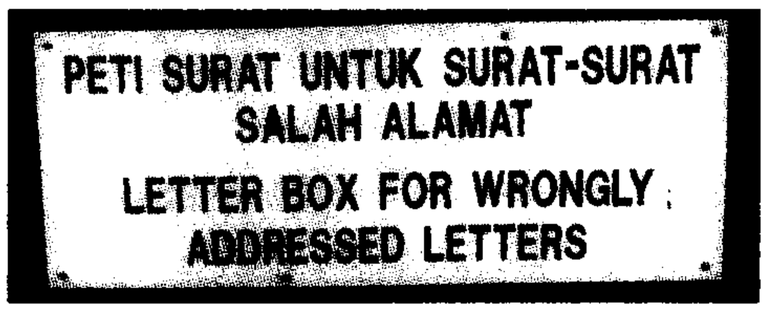
This will just be the beginning, however. Phase two will involve digging up part of the church's floor to level it, getting rid of the 19th century benches and partitioning off a children's area. One cannot help wondering, if the interior of the poor old church is going to be buggered up, why not put the wretched new lavatories inside?

But we cannot expect logic, commonsense or a feeling for the wider community from our go-ahead modern clergy. As Pevsner wrote of the church: "It faces a triangular green… No telephone wires, you will notice. Col. Warren, the Lord of the Manor, paid for them to be laid underground as early as 1937." Where is the modern benefactor who will pay for the toilets (or the rector) to be buried underground?

The congregation of St Mary's numbers about 50. The cost of the exciting improvements is about £250,000. Rev Gary certainly has his priorities right.

'Piloti'

I-SPY *Brunei* (David Abbott)



£10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs.)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

YOU have to admire the audacity of those responsible for the discredited Classical Brit Awards in that they do keep at it: peddling the same old trash, year after year, with no one even bothering to pretend the event is anything but a sales pitch for the mediocre mini-stars of "crossover" who make the record companies money.

Any vague acknowledgement of genuine achievement in the music world is accidental. And this isn't news. The racket of the Classic Brits has been exposed — not least in this organ — on an annual basis; which is why it's extraordinary to see them back yet again, running in the same way, with the same mysteriously determined shortlist of (in most cases) inconsequential artists.

Voting forms have just gone out to the so-called "Academy" of judges. But the organisers could have saved themselves the postage because the names are just as they've always been: the odd serious figure like Simon Rattle, slipped in for the sake of token respectability among a universe that otherwise comprises Russell Watson, Vanessa-Mae, the Opera Babes, the Bond girls, Izzy, the appalling Filippa Giordano… and (this *is* a new one) Mike Batt, eminent composer of *The Wombles* theme, who's up for the Contemporary Music prize. Illustrious company indeed.

In past years it's been notable how few of the voting Academy bothered to turn up at the awards ceremony, knowing they'd have to sit through Watson, Mae & co doing their turns. This year there will be fewer still. The Brits seem to have fallen on hard times and are charging their own judges £15 for the privilege of simply being there at the Albert Hall. Expect a lot of empty seats.

THE demise of the Master of the Queens Music has prompted an outpouring of tactful obituaries about Malcolm Williamson *(see Eyes passim for less reverent view).*

But how many average people even knew there was such a thing as the MQM? Or that Malcolm Williamson was it? Not many.

But now he's gone, the opportunity exists for someone to make something of the mastership again; and candidates are lining up with a discreet but definite jockeying for position.

In the lead is Michael Berkeley, who has most of the right attributes and is a good communicator. Sir John Tavener is in the running too, not least because of close connections with the Prince of Wales, although a similarly close connection with the Holy Spirit (both kinds: heavenly and bottled) makes him less than hands-on practical.

Some well-placed insiders are supporting Judith Weir — which would raise the interesting constitutional question of whether a woman *can* be Master of the Queen's Music and, if so, what her title should be. "Mistress" carries inappropriate resonances. The one thing everybody in the classical world agrees is that there's a fearful possibility the MQM might go to Lord Lloyd-Webber. But it could in fact be worse. Now that he qualifies as a Contemporary Composer (see above) there's always Mike Batt.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS BY BIRCH

Someone had overpainted a goatee, earrings and a hat, which were stripped off to reveal the original.
GOD, what vandalism!
GUARDIAN ARTS
LONG-HIDDEN REMBRANDT SELF-PORTRAIT WORTH £5m
OLD MASTER TO BE SOLD AT SOTHEBY'S
Exactly! The only things that brought it up to date!
GUARDIAN ARTS
LONG

Letters

Private Eye

Take aim... fire!

Sir,

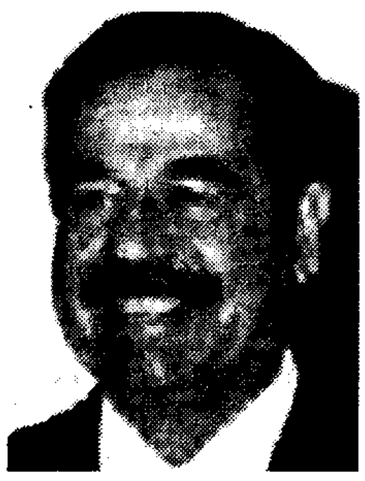
Having recognised the pen of "borrowed" Cammy detailing his current OP TELIC deployment to the Gulf (1075), I would just like to let him know that we are all eagerly awaiting his anticipated return in August/September, just in time to wave him off again on our next tour of the Balkans in October. The lengths some soldiers will go to avoid covering the Fire Brigade strike!

BRANDON (also in the Army),
Via email.

PS: If the Rev Blair of St Albion is reading – we'll take a 16% rise please.

Lookalike

Saddam Hussein



Mr Potato Head

Sir,

Is there something we're not being told?

TOBY FEDER (aged 3),
Via email.

By royal appointment

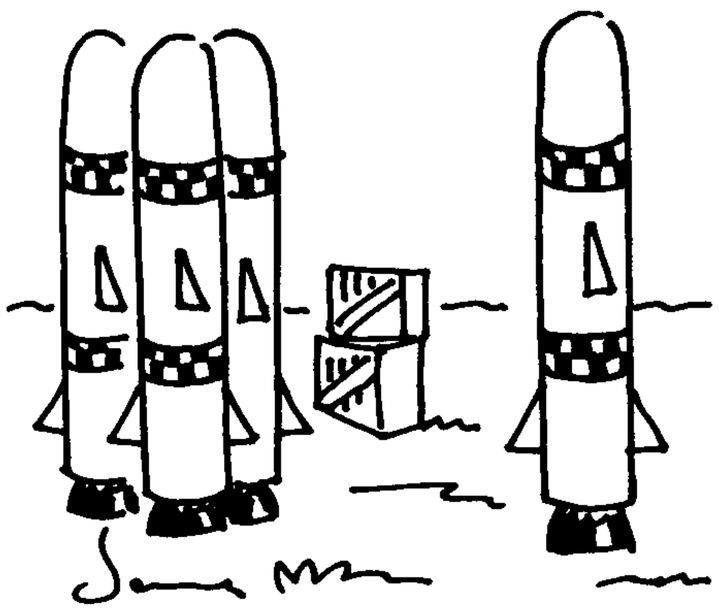
Sir,

With reference to HP Sauce (1073), may I point out that the Christmas card sent to my constituents had no political content and, furthermore, my office sought permission from Buckingham Palace to use the photograph of Her Majesty The Queen, taken during the Golden Jubilee celebrations.

May I also nail the lie once and for all that my dear late dog, "Spike" was a pit-bull terrier. He was in fact a Staffordshire Bull Terrier, who, like his master, was always proud to fly the flag!

Yours sincerely,
ANDREW ROSINDELL MP,
House of Commons.

MISGUIDED MISSILE



"Of course it's great the public are behind us on this one"

Complete Boulez?

Sir,

I am a full-time member of the English National Opera Orchestra, and I request that you correct a number of errors of fact and distortions in Lunchtime O'Boulez's piece (Eye, 1075):

Your statement the "the ENO chorus and orchestra are collectively the most difficult aggressive, old-time, union-driven bunch of people in the British music world" is untrue: I work with these people most days of the year, and they seem to me in the main to be remarkably mild-mannered, even in the face of a systematic campaign of denigration in the media and elsewhere by ENO's interim management, and ENO's chairman, Martin Smith. The ENO chorus's strike/free concert was remarkable for the dignified way in which the protest was made.

You state that "Covent Garden gets by with a chorus of just 43", but you fail to point out that Covent Garden spends a considerable period of the year in its guise as "The Royal Ballet" (which does not require a chorus, other than in rare works such as the ballet of Stravinsky's "Les Noces"). This is distorted reporting.

You state that "overtime [is] calculated in minimum four-hour blocks". This is false. In fact, after the first half hour, overtime is calculated in quarter hour blocks. Therefore, it is not "handsomely paid".

You state that "any performance taking place away from the Coliseum also comes in at a higher rate", whilst failing to point out that this applies only to the orchestra, and not to the chorus. You also fail to point out that the orchestra would willingly play for no extra charge, if a new contractual agreement can be reached. Acting general director of ENO, Caroline Felton, unilaterally scrapped negotiations with the Musicians' Union about a new contract (negotiations about which had taken place for two years prior to Ms Felton's unilateral action) late last year.

You quote basic hours for the chorus of 27 hours a week, and for the orchestra 21; but you fail to mention the hours of individual practice, learning of music (and words for the chorus), which are necessary for doing the job, over and above the hours stated, and which are unpaid for by ENO. This is distorted reporting.

You state that there will be no difference if 20 chorus members are casualised, rather than members of staff. I disagree. ENO frequently revives productions on minimal rehearsal. This means that it relies on its chorus (and orchestra) to remember works that are in the repertoire. This is impossible to maintain if the chorus (or the orchestra) is being engaged on an ad hoc basis. In fact, the financial exercise to determine whether a "contracting out" scheme would save money in the long run has been carried out more than once in the last 20 years, and the result has been negative.

It seems that the proposed cuts are a desperate short-term measure, and the true long-term consequences have not been thought out. Contracting out singers (and players) means that there is an inevitable financial incentive towards giving smaller, more economical works. This runs totally against the nature of the Coliseum, which calls for large-scale works, and resources to match.

NAME AND ADDRESS SUPPLIED.

Prince of wails

Sir,

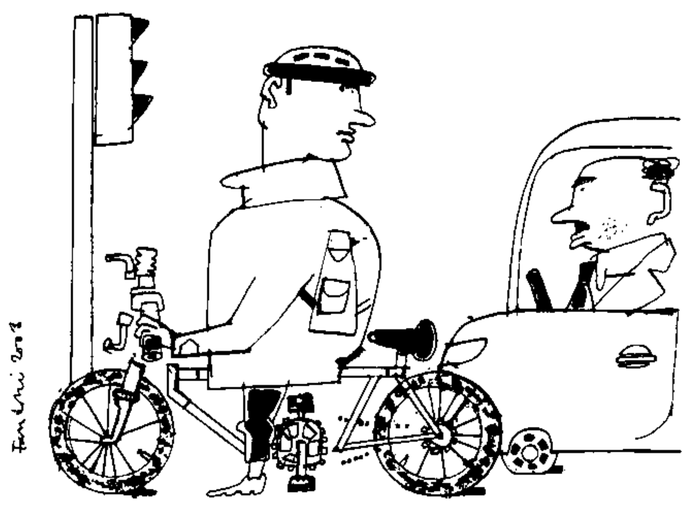
Just heard the following news bulletin on Radio 4:

"The Prince of Wales is to be operated on for a hernia which he is thought to have got while laying hedges at Highgrove, his home in Gloucestershire."

Who's Hedges?

Regards,
GEOFF PATERSON,
Newbury, Berks.

Scenes You Seldom See



"I'm not moving until the lights turn green"

CJD: the missing link

Sir,

Professor John Collinge may be correct in claiming that BSE causes sporadic as well as variant CJD in humans (1069). Shortly before vCJD became news, four UK farmers (three dairy, one beef) — all with BSE in their herds — either contracted or died of sporadic CJD. This was way above the national average and was regarded by the government's BSE advisers as a statistically significant link between BSE and sporadic CJD. I don't know if any more farmers have died of it since then or whether the sporadic CJD figures generally have shown any increase.

Yours,
ANGUS RAMSAY,
Rosyth, Fife.

FILM director Michael Winner was in intensive care last night after a heart scare.

Fifteen-stone Winner was put under 24-hour observation by cardiac doctors, fearing he might suffer dangerous internal bleeding.

Winner's girlfriend Geraldine Lynton-Edwards said: "We are all very happy about it.

Daily Mirror

Reaching probity

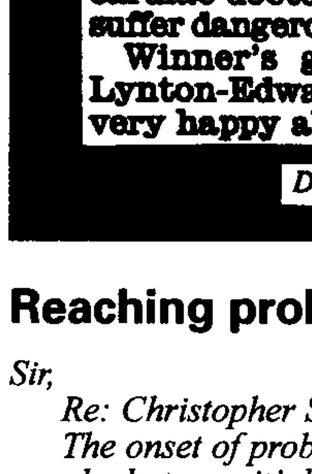
Sir,

Re: Christopher Silvester, "man of probity".

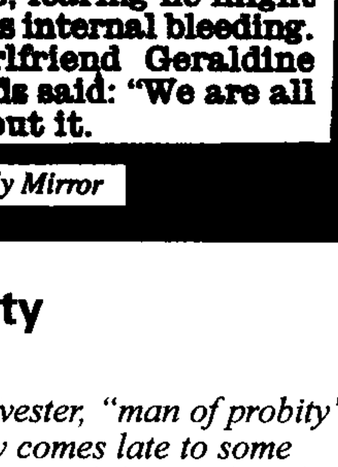
The onset of probity comes late to some people, but now it's happened do you think he might pay me for the two cartoons he "bought" in 1986?

Your sincerely,
NEIL BENNETT,
Newark, Notts.

Lookalike



Posh



Jackson

Sir,

I have noticed an uncanny resemblance between Michael Jackson and Victoria Beckham. I wonder if by any chance they are related?

Yours faithfully,
ED HARMAN,
High Wycombe.

Con-textual analysis

Sir,

By peculiar coincidence, I read Out Of Context in Eye 1075 an hour or so before taking my seat at Our House in the West End. The quote "At last, a musical that rivals Mamma Mia!" is indeed unfortunate — and not just because of the mystery surrounding its origin. Our House is in fact a far better musical than Mamma Mia, with superior writing, acting and songs that actually fit what's going on instead of being crudely sledgehammered into the action. Michael Billington was one of the few reviewers who did not appreciate it.

It may not match Mamma Mia's international success, but it certainly deserves to do so.

Yours faithfully,
DR GEORGE SIK,
Via email.

Photo opportunity

Sir,

The Eye loves pictures of ageing newsmen cavorting with young attractive women, which is why I ask that this piccy be published; I found it on the Beeb website.

Yours jealously,
JOHHNY M.,
Via email.

Sir,

We haven't had a picture of an ageing newspaper editor and a fulsome young woman in the Eye for a bit. Surely you might oblige us again.
ALI CATTERALL,
Via email.

Sir,

Given the current serious events I think it is laudable that the great men of the journalistic world can take time to relax in the company of those of the younger (and observably female) generation. I wonder if their is any photograghic evidence of such scenes of intergenerational exchange?

Yours expectantly,
THOMAS GIBSON,
London.

Sir,

I note that Mr Hislop has been featured on the BBC website caption contest. Perhaps you might have a similar picture of a highly regarded editor and a young lovely?

Yours in anticipation,
AXEL THOMSON,
Via email.

(Yes, all right, very funny... Thanks for the dozens of similarly amusing letters. Ed)

BAA humbug

Sir,

Congratulations on your scoop ("Pie in the Sky", 7 March 2003) about BAA's influence with the government. So influential are we, in fact, that it will have taken us 15 years to turn a piece of land in the middle of Heathrow from a sewage plant into a passenger terminal, after the longest public inquiry in British history.

The reason the assumptions of forecast air passenger growth which appear in BAA's annual report are uncannily similar to the government's, is because we quoted the government.

But it was good to see the "free parking for MPs" story given another airing. For the record, we do not declare these as a political donation because the electoral commission and the DTI have said they are not declarable, either under the political parties, elections and referendums act or the companies act. But the recipients declare them, in accordance with the law.

Your sincerely,
STEVE HARDWICK,
Public Affairs Director, BAA plc, London.

Persecuted Monks?

Sir,

Your Rotten Boroughs exposé (1075) is patently subjective and reeks of vested interest, on the Eye's part, of the type it normally castigates.

If your report is to have any credence, we, the readers, must needs believe that the whole of Northampton council and the judiciary are both corrupt and out to get Geoff Monks! Why?

Generally I despise all politicians, councils, solicitors and the judiciary, but your report is a prejudicial Mickey Mouse mish-mash, and an affront to objective reasoning.

MALCOLM ROBINSON,
Barnsley, South Yorks.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Liverpool – the only team in action in the Premiership. A good chance for them..."
DAMIEN JOHNSON, BBC1
(Philip Cornwall)

"It's his outstanding pace that stands out..."
ROBBIE EARLE, ITV
(K. Cullen)

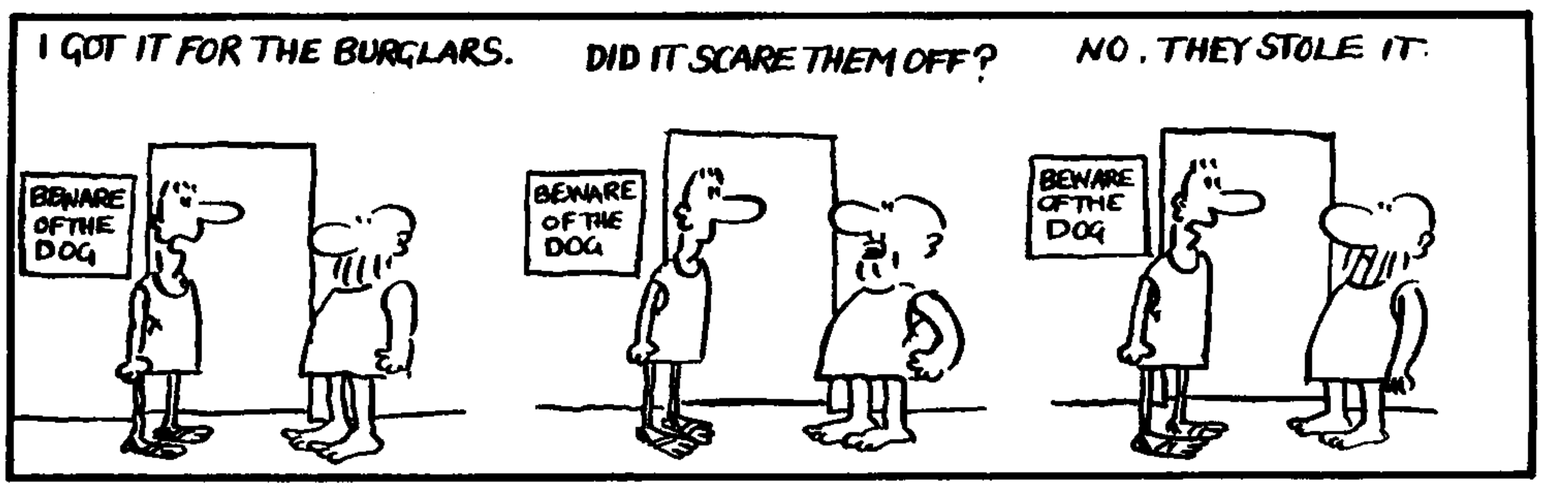
"Matches don't come any bigger than FA Cup quarter-finals."
NEIL WARNOCK, Radio 5 Live
(Simon Round)

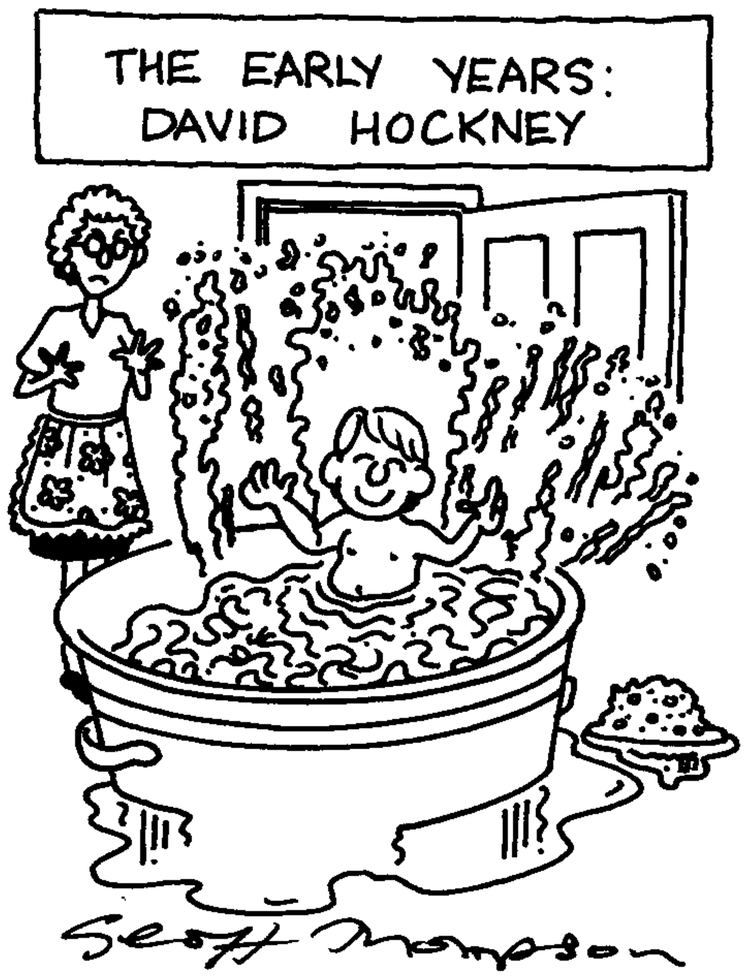
"Football games turn on things that are done by players."
WILLIE MILLER, BBC Radio Scotland
(Michael Nicholson)

"... and he's fallen into a coma of competitiveness."
CLIVE TYLDESLEY, Radio 5 Live
(Alex Gatrell)

HOM SAP

AUSTIN





Homes for lawyers

Sir,

You express surprise that legal aid lawyers should be accepted by Threshold Key homes as key workers entitled to cut-price homes, alongside nurses and teachers. That surprise is no doubt shared by many in the general population, who are perhaps unaware that even experienced lawyers in London who do mainly legal aid tend to earn around £25-32,000 a year. To achieve this, they have to undergo six years of training, during which they will build up five-figure debts. Junior teachers and senior nurses earn similar salaries, but I have yet to read any media stories about fat cat nurses and teachers.

Legal aid lawyers provide a vital public service to their local communities. They support victims of domestic violence, the mentally ill, those suffering ill health because of poor housing, and people fleeing oppression. They are an essential bulwark against unduly heavy-handed anti-terrorism activities by the state, and against the population's anti-paedophile and anti-asylum-seeker hysteria.

While fire-fighters are offered a 16% increase, hospital consultants 19% and GPs 30%, legal aid rates have been frozen every year since 1992, with the sole exceptions of 1995 and 2001. This support from Threshold Key Homes is a long-overdue recognition of the fact that those providing this vital service can no longer afford to live in London any more than teachers and nurses can. Offering legal aid lawyers a 10% discount as against the 60% discount offered to teachers and nurses does not appear unreasonable in the circumstances.

Yours sincerely,
RICHARD MILLER,
Director, Legal Aid Practitioners Group (LAPG), Cambridge.

Another boob?

Sir,

I am puzzled by the drawing of "a young woman called Daisy" (1075). Who she? I am even more puzzled by the reference to her flashing her embonpoint when she is shown as exposing most of her bosom. My dictionary defines embonpoint as "état du corps, surtout en parlant de personnes grasses", which clearly refers to what in English is sometimes called "a spare tyre". I am reliably informed that the correct French euphemism for the female bosom is "balcon", for obvious reasons.

Yours faithfully,
PROFESSOR ALAN BULLOCK
Leeds.

Letter from **Paris**
from Our Own Correspondent

OUR national champions of industry – Vivendi, Suez, Alstom, Alcatel, Canal Plus and others – are going down the economic drain. But the national champion himself, President Jacques Chirac, 70, has never had it so good.

After his remarkable victory in last year's presidential elections (even socialists were forced to vote for him in the run-off against right-wing extremist Jean-Marie Le Pen), Chirac has taken on a new lease of life.

Wisely he has switched to foreign policy and old-style Gaullist grandeur, leaving the growing economic mess to premier Jean-Pierre Raffarin. This burst of activity was OK when it involved harmless trips to friendly countries, but it has assumed a more serious turn with his stubborn *non* to George Bush and his ugly snub of Tony Blair.

Chirac's comeback is remarkable for a man who was widely suspected for years of using City of Paris money to prop up the Gaullist party, of enjoying an extravagant lifestyle at taxpayers' expense and who once sent his chauffeur with state cash to buy plane tickets to Mauritius and elsewhere. There were lurid tales of slush funds at City Hall, which was rarely audited, and at the Elysée Palace, which is certainly not audited and where safes full of cash hide behind Aubusson tapestries.

When it comes to the Butcher of Baghdad, as with his other charming friends in Africa and the Middle East, our leader is nothing but even-handed. Where once he played on his friendship with Saddam Hussein to position French firms for contracts, he is now working to make sure TotalFinaElf benefits from any post-Saddam carve-up. In the past Chirac invited Saddam to France and sold him petrochemical plants, an airport, a metro and a nuclear plant (destroyed later by the Israelis). Now high-profile anti-Saddam characters have been quietly allowed into France.

Since the row with Washington, Chirac has successfully muzzled the French press. For example, when foreign minister Dominique de Villepin let slip to a group of journalists and MPs that: "If we use our veto in the UN, we will be shooting the Americans in the back", he was told from on high to "retract" his remark. The hacks acquiesced but an MP leaked it.

Around the country Chirac has an 80 percent approval rating, the only opposition coming from some members of the ruling UMP party who worry about a long term split with the US. Such concerns matter little at the Elysée palace. Chirac recently displayed our national talent for tact and diplomacy by telling *Time* magazine that he liked "US junk food". To roars of domestic approval, he seems to be going out of his way to annoy our cousins across the water – inviting Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe to Paris, rejecting US entreaties to back a second UN resolution and any NATO aid package for Turkey, signing shady arms deals.

In fact we couldn't spare too many troops even if we wanted to help *les anglosaxons*. All our best soldiers are tied up in a civil war in Ivory Coast – a crisis that has been building for years and which our enemies say we have helped fuel. Nor are we in any mood to question some our leader's more personal weaknesses, such as recent revelations of his astonishingly large food and wine bills.

Indeed things are going so well that "le bulldozer" as he was known in less kind times may even seek a third term. Victory might provide a platform for the place in history he so craves – and also an escape from prosecution, as our laws prevent actions against the misuse of money and influence peddling by those still in office.

Will it all end in tears? These Gaullist-style *nons* may lack the panache of de Gaulle himself, but they are playing very well here. Yet Chirac has helped split the EU, upsetting not only Britain but also several of the soon-to-join members from eastern Europe. Meanwhile our economy continues to head down the toilet. The president is doing nothing about this and may soon be called to account for that – and much else besides.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

O "I saw Tom Ridge on television," Steven Bosell told reporters outside his home in Corona, California, "telling us that all citizens should go out and stock up on duct tape and plastic, in case of terrorist attack. I'm a patriot, so I went straight down to the local Costco and bought $100 worth of duct tape and some plastic sheeting, to protect my house from radiation.

"As soon as I got home, I taped up the doors and windows, but then I did some thinking. I realised that if survivors like myself are going to reproduce and repopulate the earth after a biological attack, then we have to protect our private parts as well. So I used my last roll of duct tape to wrap up my privates, leaving just a little hole at the end for toilet functions.

"A few days later, the Department of Homeland Security told us that the alert was over, and that we could remove the duct tape. But when I tried to peel the tape off my privates, skin and body hair began peeling off too. I injured myself badly, and there was blood everywhere. The pain was so bad that I called an ambulance, and was taken to hospital, where the tape was eventually removed, though not without further serious injuries to my privates.

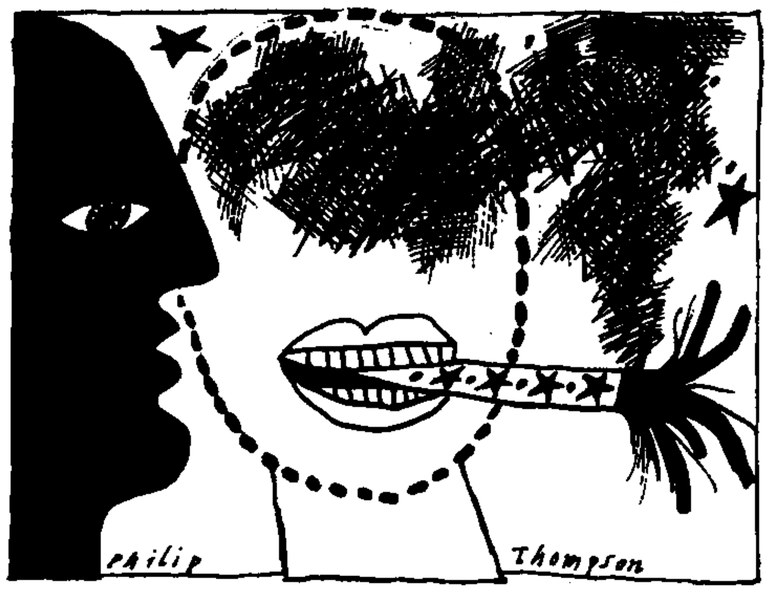
"When I explained what I'd done, the doctors and nurses laughed at me, and went out of their way to make me feel like a fool. But the people I really blame are the government, because Mr Ridge made me do this. And President Bush is equally liable for injury to my reproductive future, because he hired Mr Ridge to run the Department of Homeland Security, which gave the nation bad advice. That's why I have filed a lawsuit against Mr Ridge, the Department, and the President, claiming compensation for emotional distress, personal injury, and sexual disfunction."

The Bush Administration has so far refused to comment. *(The Corona Times, 13/2/03. Spotter: Andy Ross)*

— O —

O *"Brazilians have always had a weakness for playing Russian roulette," a spokesman for the Rio de Janeiro police force told reporters, "but this version got out of hand. Antonio de Caja and some friends had been drinking cachaca all night and letting off fireworks, to celebrate the holidays, and eventually they challenged each other to a game. The rules were simple. They would each put a firework in their mouth, light the fuse, and then see who would dare to hold his the longest before spitting it out. And afterwards, the ones who had chickened out first would have to admit to the winner that they were cowards.*

"Within a few seconds, the other guys lost their nerve, spat their fireworks out, and hailed Antonio as the winner. But unfortunately he held his firework in his teeth a bit too long, and

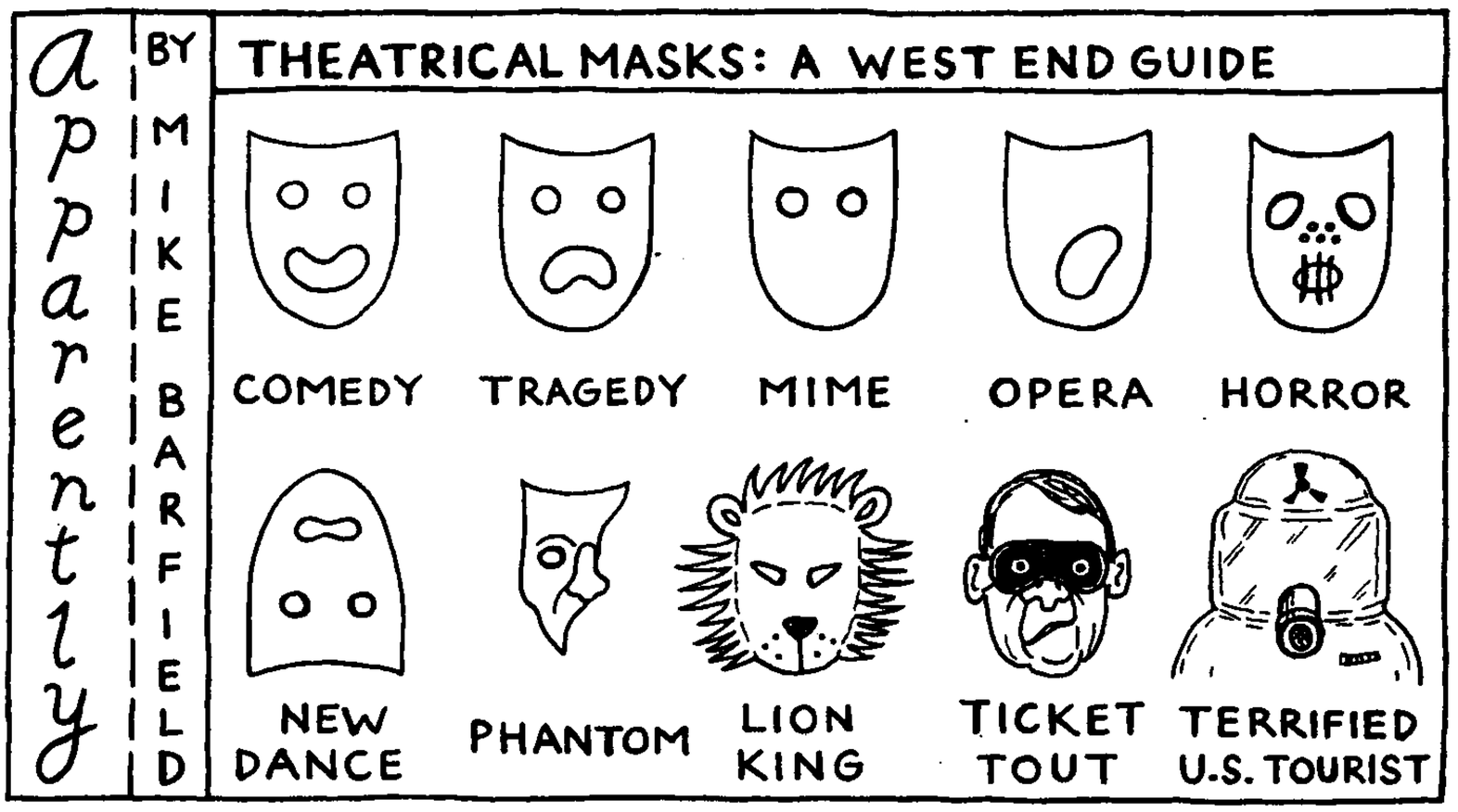


the front of his head was blown off, killing him instantly. So, in a way, all the men lost face." (O Globo, 10/12/02. Spotter: Aidan Turnbull)

— O —

O "As part of our campaign to reduce traffic accidents, we have been asking weary motorists on long journeys to park their vehicles and rest," Dr Wichai Chokwiwat of the Department of Transport told a press conference in Bangkok. "But it is expensive and impractical for most drivers to check into hotels for a nap, so instead we have come up with this idea of offering traditional Thai massage at petrol stations."

Dr Wichai was announcing an experimental scheme, to be run jointly by the Bang Chak oil company and the Department of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine Development. "It's well-known that a relaxing massage refreshes people far more than drinking a caffeine-based beverage. So after motorists have filled their tanks, they can take off their shirts and lie down on couches in the forecourt, next to the pumps, where qualified masseurs and masseuses will attend to them. They can spend half an hour relaxing their muscles, and when they get back behind the wheel, they will feel fresh, and will be able to concentrate on driving. We are convinced that this will be a major contribution to road safety." *(Bangkok Post, 2/1/03. Spotter: Stephen Clein)*



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

A Personal Message from the Vicar:

Hullo – and I've hardly got time to say that, I've been working so hard! In fact I've been working flat out to sort everything out before it's too late. And when I say flat out, I mean flat out! Not that I'm tired. Don't get me wrong. I'm not tired at all, it's just that I've been working flat out.

Our friend in Tesco got it wrong as usual, telling me that I looked tired. "You look as though you need a good night's sleep, vicar," he said. "You're not making any sense." "Yes I am," I told him, knocking him flat out over the organic GM-free yoghurt display.

Let me make it clear to him and to all of you, I've never felt less tired in my life. I've been working my flats out. I've got two of them. But we've drawn a line under that. I don't mind, it comes with the job.

And the more unpopular you are, the less tired you are. I deny it flat out, do you hear?

Unfortunately the vicar was unable to conclude his inspirational message, owing to the fact that he is currently flat out on his bed. The editor of the newsletter is too busy running around London for charity (supposedly!) to help out so the vicar has asked me as his oldest friend and the former church warden, to step in for this issue and take over as acting editor. See below.

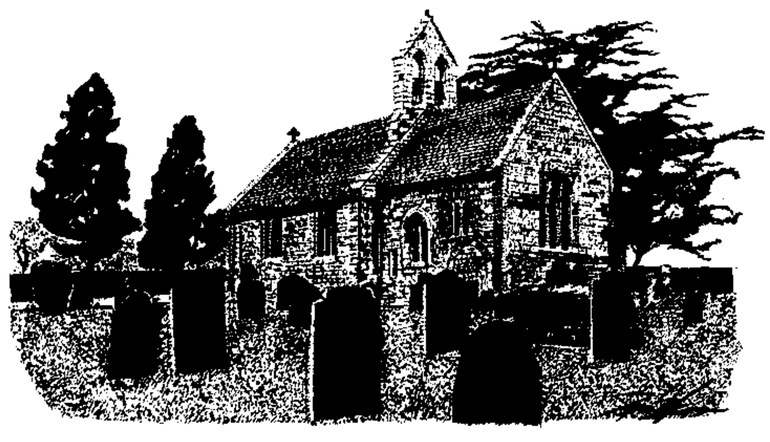
Peter Mandelson

A Message To All Parishioners From Your Acting Editor

You all know me, and I know where you all live!

Let me begin by explaining the position about Mrs Short and the PCC. Some of you have been asking, understandably, whether she has been sacked for her act of gross disloyalty, when she rang up Mr Rawnsley to ask whether she could be rude about the vicar on his Sunday evening radio show "Singalong with Andy" on St Albion FM. I don't know what got into Clare that Sunday afternoon. Maybe she enjoyed a glass or two too much at lunch! Certainly her voice sounded, how can I put it, a bit slurry and unfocused. Indeed some of you have told me privately that her performance reminded them of Mrs Mowlam at her worst: not only drunk, but mentally deranged into the bargain!

Perhaps we'll never know. But the point is that Mrs Short used the opportunity of her appearance on Mr Rawnsley's popular karaoke programme to say that the vicar was



"out of control" and had behaved "recklessly" in supporting our good friend the Rev. Dubya in his crusade to rid the world of the Great Satan and what he describes as "this axis of evilitude".

Mrs Short had a golden opportunity to say that she admired everything the vicar was doing. Instead of which she callously and treacherously plunged her dagger into the vicar's back – whether through drunkenness or just the mental degeneration brought on by being a sad woman living all alone in her dirty bedsit without a partner, due to the fact that everyone hates and despises her. I will leave you to decide.

In spite of all this, I must make clear that the vicar has no wish to make a martyr of Clare, and has decided to keep her on as a full member of the PCC. She is still more than welcome to turn up to PCC meetings, so long as a) she doesn't say anything; b) she doesn't expect anyone to say anything to her; c) she doesn't come at all.

I think this demonstrates what a generous and forgiving man your vicar is, that he is prepared to overlook this act of drunken madness on behalf of Mrs Short.

It is truly astonishing that there are people in the parish who think that Tony can be replaced.

I have even heard that some people are putting forward the name of someone who has been pretending to be right behind the vicar's crusade, in his miserly Scottish tones, when we all know that, behind Tony's back this particular person is doing everything he can to undermine all that Tony has achieved, even to the point of deliberately messing up the parish finances just to make Tony look silly!

I am not going to mention any names obviously, but just because you are good at doing sums (or you pretend you are!) doesn't mean that you'd be any good at keeping the parish happy and united, like Tony!

P. Mandelson
c/o The Handy Mandy 24/7 Service Agency,
Any jobs considered –
particularly Mr Campbell's.

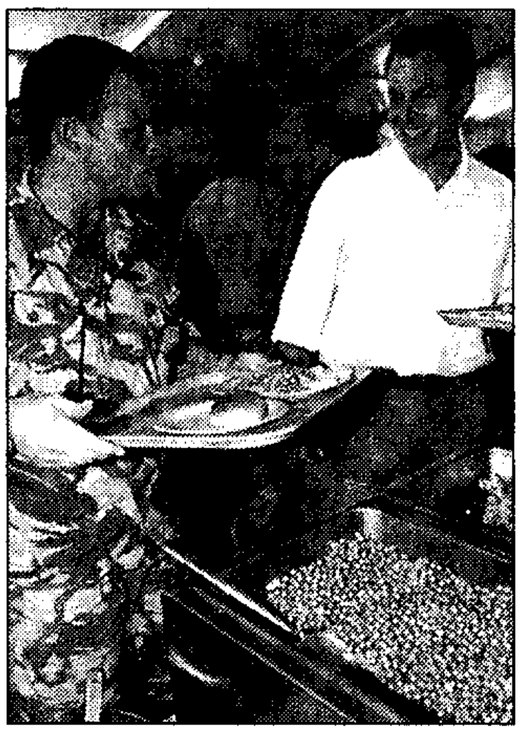
"I'm a fighter not a quitter,
I'm a writer, I'm not bitter!"

An Urgent Message From The Rev. Dubya of The Latter-Day Morons to His Brethren Across the Sea in Great England

It is the last hour on the last day, my fellow non-Americans. And it looks like some of the posse are chickening out and riding back to town just when the lead is beginning to fly. I'm mighty disappointed in you Rev. Tiny Blur. You were going to be riding side-by-side with me, as my Deputy-Sheriff. Now it looks as though I'm going to have to ask for that tin star back, Rev. Timmy. Looks like you're no better than that cheese-eating surrender monkey Cheerac. Well, hear this, Pastor Bloom. Whether y'all join or not makes not a coyote's cuss of a difference. 'Cos I'm headin' out and goin' in, guns-a-blazin'. Make your play, Saddam, and kiss goodbye to the world.

Allelulia and Amen,
Rev. Dubya,
(US Marshall and Texas Ranger, 1st Class).

I have left this message uncut to show the kind of strain the vicar is under, as he tries to deal with our eccentric friend across the water. P.M.



TONY VISITS THE TROOPS

"No peas for me" quips the vicar! Proving neither he nor his jokes are at all tired! P.M.

Verses by a Local Poet

Bastard!

What a big prick the vicar is
Trying to screw everyone
When we all know
He is a total tosser.

H. Pinter (aged 11½), St Albion's Primary School Remedial Class

As acting editor I am publishing little Harold's poem to show how we need to raise standards at our primary school. P.M.

MOMENT OF TRUTH... DESTINY CALLS... WORLD ON THE BRINK... TIME FOR CLICHE... ETC

by Our Entire Staff **Phil Pages**

YES, there is no doubt about it – today marks the moment of truth when destiny calls with the world on the brink. History will record that it was on this day that the clichés were finally unleashed and *(cont. p. 94)*

Why It Is Legal To Go To War

by Our Legal Staff **Marcel Berlinwall**

THE ATTORNEY General, Lord Goldsmith, has reassured the Prime Minister that any war against Iraq is not only just but legal under an ancient British law called *De Bello Saddamico Conveniensis*, which dates all the way back to yesterday morning.

According to the ancient statute, "The First Minister of the British Nation, whomsoever he may be, shall have the inalienable right to declare war on behalf of His Majesty's government without let or hindrance from any foreign bodies whomsoever they may be or any of his ministers who may calleth him reckless or the unruly populace of the country or any French person who may attempt to invoke divers bogus laws *(Lex Bogi)* which shall be deemed 'an unreasonable veto'. All of which quite obviously alloweth the Prime Minister to do whatever he so desireth with the full might and majesty of the law of the United States of America."

Signed
The Lord High Chancellor
Lord Lairg
The Year of Our Lord 1122

On Other Pages ■ Is the document a forgery?

Exclusive To All Papers

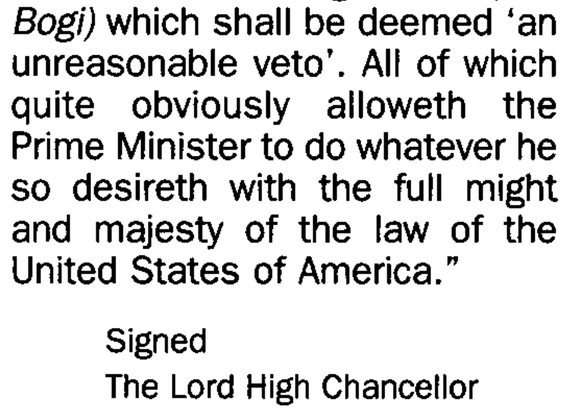
OUR BOYS READY TO GO IN

by Our War Staff **Phil Acres**

AS THE countdown to war reaches its final conclusion, the dedicated men and women of the graphics department are on red alert – ready to drop into the newspaper at a moment's notice.

Armed with the latest technology (Apple Macs) they can deliver an amazing range of graphics with very little warning. "We are talking coloured maps, cutaway drawings of tanks, floor plans of Saddam's bunker, little men representing the Republican Guard and big black arrows everywhere," said one veteran.

"This is what we've been training for and we're very keen to get on with the job. We are confident that we'll cover a huge amount of space on the first day and it will only be a week or so before we can go back to illustrating articles asking whether the Pyramids were early space stations."



How It Will Look – The Sort Of Black Arrows You Will See

THE WEEK IN PICTURES

BRITISH DIPLOMACY

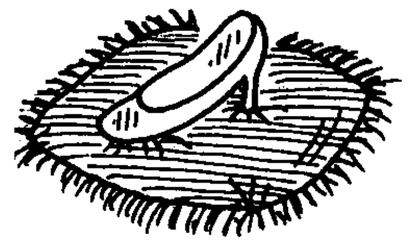
AMERICAN DIPLOMACY

INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY

Nursery Times

21 March 2003

BUTTONS RESIGNS OVER PALACE GIFT ROW



BY OUR COURT STAFF HUMPTY DUMPSTER

THE Royal Butler, Mr Derek Buttons, has today resigned from the employment of Prince Charming after a devastating report by his friend Sir "Muslim" Anderson into the so-called "Cash-for-slippers" scandal which has rocked the Royal palace to its foundations.

Buttons is accused of selling off a number of valuable items given to the Prince, including a priceless crystal slipper originally belonging to Cinderella.

Prince Charmless is accused of pocketing the money from the sale of the slipper and other gifts in order to pay off another footman, a Mr Georgie Porgy, who was rumoured to "kiss the boys and make them cry".

The Prince denied that any impropriety had taken place but added that someone had to carry the can and it certainly wasn't going to be him.

The Queen (as Mr Buttons is known) was reported last night to be in the counting house counting out the money from his enormous pay-off and *(cont. pageboy 94)*

Is Buttons Guilty? You decide:
018987324 *OH YES HE IS!*
0189874237 *OH NO HE ISN'T!*
0189842765 *WATCH OUT! HE'S BEHIND YOU!*

ON OTHER PAGES

● Princess saw Charming and Buttons in compromising position **2**

● *Will the Ugly Sister ever be Queen? You decide again* **3** (See above for numbers)

SUN SPECIAL

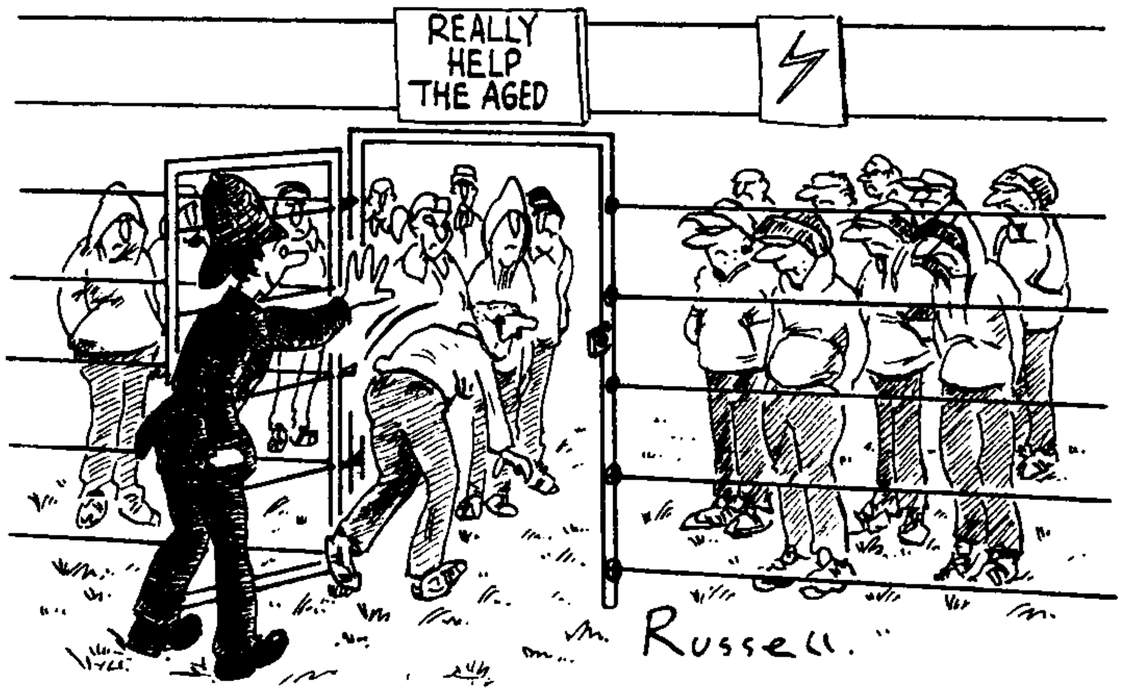
ALAN CHIRAC REFUSES TO PLAY FOR ENGLAND

by Our Football Staff PHIL BOOTS

What a bastard! Alan Chirac – a typical cheese-eating surrender monkey if ever we saw one!

Whilst the rest of the country would be proud to put on the England uniform, traitor Chirac, 32, says he can't be bothered.

How typically French! The Sun says "Hop off back to France, you snivelling, yellow chicken – and take your stinky garlic frogs' legs with you". *(Please check this is right. R. Wade.)*



Nature notes with "Old Ron"

This is the perfect time of year to get out into the woods in the hope of seeing buggers in their natural habitat. Mostly the bugger is a shy, nocturnal creature, who can be easily distinguished by his bushy moustache and his shiny leather jacket. But during the mating season, which is all year round, the buggers will come out in broad daylight, to romp about and play their little games. They will even let photographers near enough to take pictures of them, and ruin my career. As I said at the time, "Well, I'll be badgered!".

Ron Davies,
The Old Problem,
Clapham, London

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

SIR MICHAEL CAINE

What do you remember about your childhood spoons?

You've got to be joking. We lived in a street where there was one spoon between ten families. My old Mum had to beg for the use of that spoon. The rest of the time we had to eat with our fingers – not that we had anything to eat. That's why all the snobs in this country try and put me down. I've had to work bloody hard to get the spoons I've got now and when you come back to this country after working in America the first thing that happens is that the taxman tries to take all your bloody spoons away. Take them away!

Did spoons feature prominently in "The Ipcress File"?

Some people in this country are born with bloody great silver spoons in their mouths. Lord this and Sir that but not me, my Dad worked in Billingsgate as a fish porter and…

Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

No. Not a lot of people know that.

NEXT WEEK: Anne Widdecombe – *"Me and My Comb."*

DAME THORA HIRD R.I.P.

"And another thing, that lifestyle guru of yours is a bloody waste of money"

EX-ARMY OFFICER ACCUSED OF CHEATING

by Our Political Staff **Peter O'Bore**

A FORMER Army officer tried to bluff his way to becoming prime minister by an elaborate system of coughing whenever he was asked a question.

His scam was rumbled when television viewers saw the accused man, Captain Duncan Smith, nervously coughing whenever he was asked a question by quizmaster Tony Blair.

Who Wants To Be Completely Useless?

At one point Smith was asked to name the leader of the Tory Party and was given four choices: A. Michael Portillo; B. Kenneth Clarke; C. Sir Alec Douglas-Home; D. Oliver Letwin.

Videos clearly show Captain Smith looking deeply uncomfortable and coughing several times before asking whether he could phone a friend.

Unfortunately, he couldn't think of one, so the quizmaster moved on to ask: "In the current crisis over Iraq, who do you support? A. President Bush; B. President Saddam Hussein; C. President Blair; D. The late President Reagan."

After a long pause and a further prolonged bout of coughing, Captain Smith said, "I think it's D, but I can't be sure."

He was then arrested for fraud and for passing himself off as Leader of the Opposition.

● Could you answer the questions which earned the Captain a million articles saying 'He's Not Up To It'?

See our website – www.duncansmith.cough.uk

Late News

POULTRY DISCOVERY SHOCK

By Our Consumer Affairs Reporter **Colonel Sanders**

THERE was shock today after tests on tens of thousands of tonnes of chicken used in the catering trade and take-away shops were found to contain traces of chicken.

"In some cases up to fifty percent of what we tested actually turned out to be actual chicken," said one of the astonished inspectors who carried out the raid. "In some establishments we found proprietors flagrantly ignoring industry guidelines by not pumping their poultry full of water and collagen proteins extracted from cow hides."

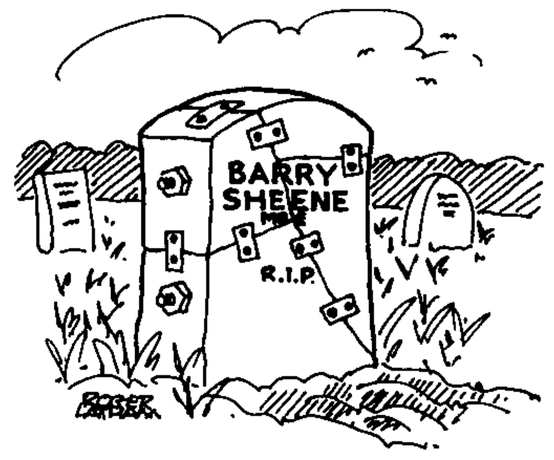
However an industry spokesman said these incidents of "real chicken" were confined to an handful of outlets, and said this would have no effect on the vast quantity of rubbery tasteless meat sold to consumers.

FICTITIOUS CHARACTER DIES ON TV

By **Cole Feet**

SHOCKING news emerged last night when it was revealed that a fictitious character died in a dramatised road accident. Newspapers reported the awful accident in full, with accompanying pictures.

Said an onlooker: "If it wasn't for the fact that Rachel is not a real person then this would've been a very sad and tragic day indeed."



POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam
Horst Buchholz

So. Farewell then
Horst Buchholz.

You were in
The Magnificent Seven.
You were the young one
Who fell in love
With the beautiful Mexican
Girl at the end.

In recent months
We have said farewell to
James Coburn
And the other one, whose
Name no one
Can remember.

Yes, you are nearly
All gone.

But the music will live on.
Dum. Di-da-da-dum.
Dum. Di-da-da-dum.
Da-Da.
Di-da-DA-da.

E.J. Thribb
(The Magnificent
Seventeen-and-a-half)

THE HAS-BEANO FEATURING BORIS THE MENACE

Baghdad Telegraph

Eerie Calm as Blair Prepares for War

*by **Saddam Nicholson***

London, Friday

FOR THE first time people here are beginning to talk about a country without Blair. Few people like to say so openly, but there is a new mood in the streets.

On the surface it all looks normal. People are going to work, buying goods in the shops and driving around in their cars.

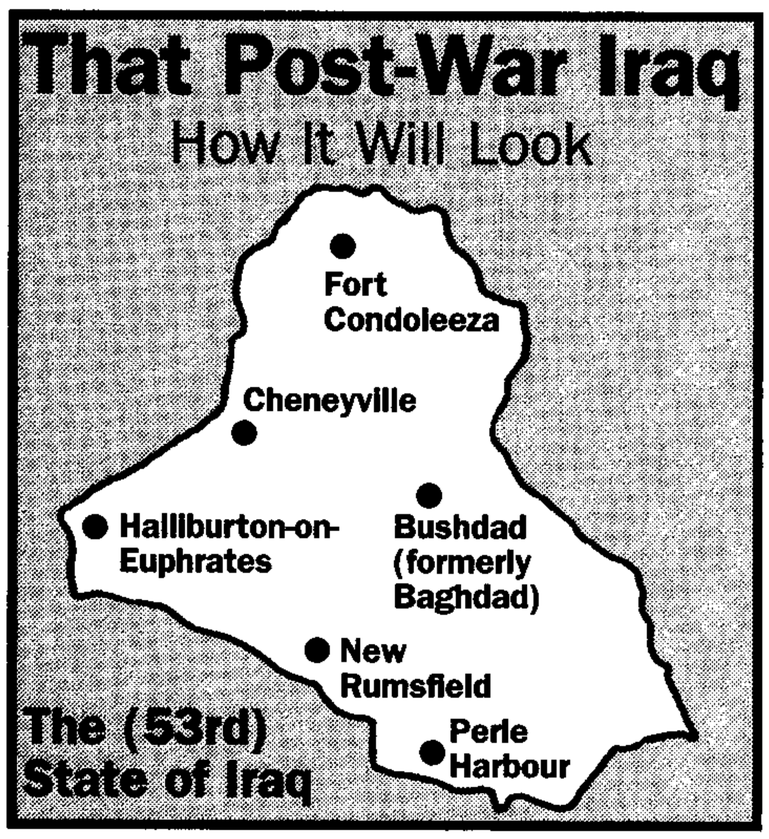
But beneath the surface there is a very real sense that they may be living through the last days of Blair.

The news on the television is predictable – the leader appears surrounded by his loyal henchmen and exhorts the country to follow him in their patriotic duty.

But when the crisis comes people here know that the silent majority will be delighted to see the end of his reign of error.

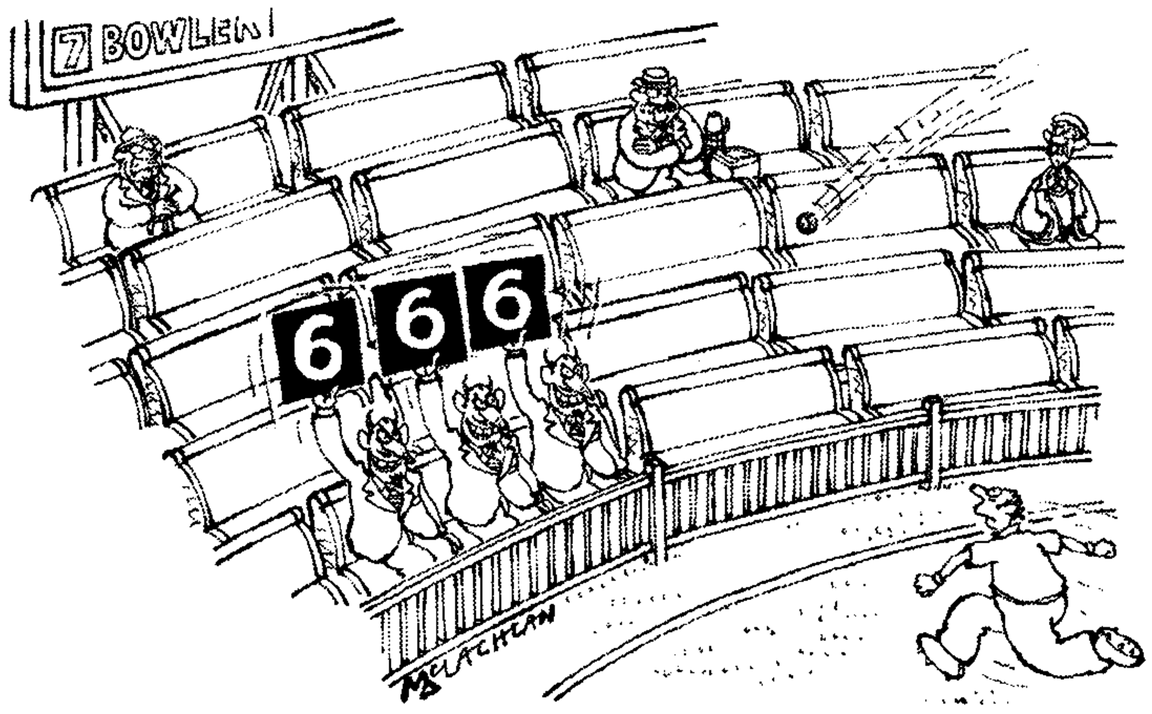
The future is unclear, but there are those here who see a welcome return to democracy with the opposition parties at last given a voice.

But there are others who fear that the Americans will merely impose their own military governor and *(contd. p.94.)*



On Other Pages

- Your Camel Trains Tonight
- Damascus Champions League dream – Hope Fades
- Unfunny cartoon by Maq



THOSE SIX BLAIR TESTS IN FULL

WHAT THE UN LAUGHED AT

1 **Saddam Hussein must hereby pledge that he will destroy all model aircraft with a wingspan of less than 20 millimetres.**

2 **Saddam Hussein must promise to allow all Iraqi scientists to live in Basingstoke under the supervision of the UN.**

3 **Saddam Hussein must solemnly agree to be interviewed on ITV by Martin Bashir and admit to sleepovers with underage boys in his palaces.**

4 **Saddam Hussein must decommission his moustache and agree to a timetable for the destruction of all facial hair in the new UN-guaranteed "no-moustache zone".**

5 **Saddam Hussein must bring his vehicle to an emergency stop when the instructor taps his newspaper on the windscreen.**

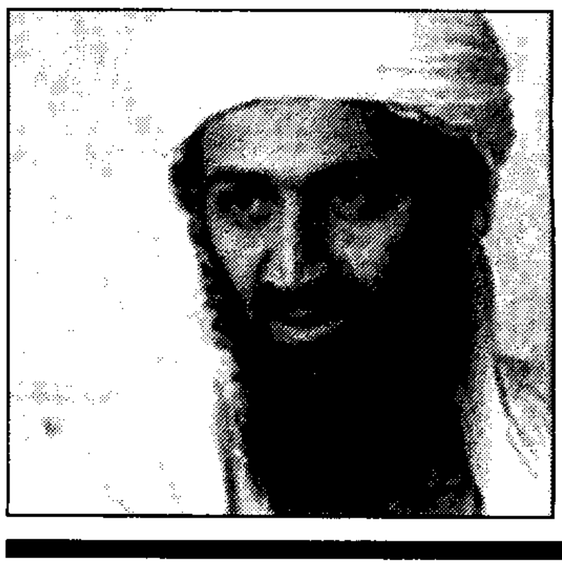
6 **Mr Blair is not at all tired, and Saddam Hussein must acknowledge this publicly on David Frost's Sunday breakfast programme.**

You have three hours to comply with the above tests; otherwise we shall invade Iraq in an hour's time.

"EXCUSE ME SIR, COULD YOU DIRECT ME TO CULPEPPER ROAD?"

FOLLOWING reports that Osama Bin Laden had shaved off his beard in an attempt to evade capture, the Government has released this photo-fit of the world's most evil person for identification purposes and has warned the country to be on the look-out.

HOW HE LOOKED



HOW HE MIGHT LOOK NOW

Daily Mail

FRIDAY, MARCH 21, 2003

DAILY TELEGRAPH IS COMPLETELY WASHED UP – SHOCK NEW FINDINGS

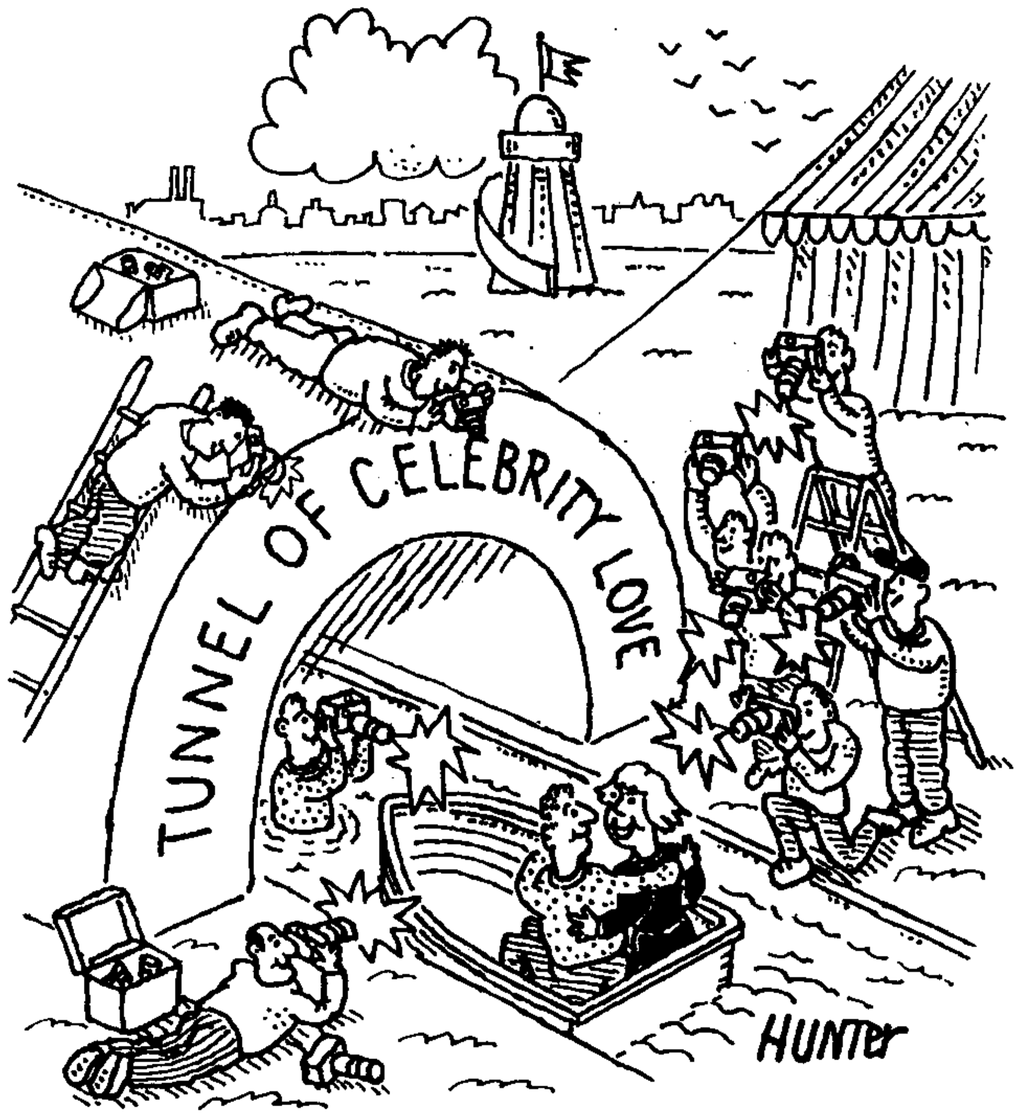
By Our Objective Staff
Nick Readers

"THE DAILY TELEGRAPH is utterly useless," says a top media analyst who, after an intensive independent analysis of the newspaper, has discovered that "everyone in Britain hates the Telegraph and would much rather read the Daily Mail".

The analyst, Mr P. Dacre (no relation) added, "It is a known fact that the Daily Telegraph only sold three copies last year, and those were given away free to the editor's children to use as bedding for their hamsters."

He continued: "The redesign has been a total disaster and there is clear evidence to suggest that looking at the new masthead causes cancer."

The analyst concluded, "If you carry on reading the Telegraph it is almost certain that the price of your house will fall by at least 300%. Print all of this or you are sacked."



Lynda Lee-Potter

Why this vain, self-righteous woman should keep her moral lectures to herself

DOESN'T it make you sick, the sight of this arrogant, sanctimonious hypocrite parading her conscience all over the media and pretending she's only doing it for the public good?

But enough of me. That Clare Short *(contd. p.94)*

ST CAKES TO REMAIN 'ALL RICH'

by **St Hilda Thatcher**

THE prestigious £24,000-a-term Midlands independent boarding school St Cakes (motto 'quis paget entrant' – 'who pays gets in') has decided to remain a bastion against the egalitarianism of the modern world by refusing to allow poor parents to send their children there.

The vote to keep St Cakes "all rich" was a unanimous one, taken by the headmaster Mr R.J. Kipling.

"We wanted to preserve a traditional 'rich' atmosphere," he explained, "where our pupils do not have to face all the distractions associated with the presence of poor people.

"Our exam results," he went on, "show the undoubted advantage of single-income-band education. We got our last GCSE in 1987 and we don't want our record ruined."

NOT IN OUR NAME NI
AND THE ANTI-WAR STICKERS ARE INCLUDED IN THE PRICE
OUT OF IRAQ
BIRKETTS ESTATE AGENTS
HOUSE FOR SALE
DO TRY TO COME TO OUR COFFEE MORNING. WE'VE INVITED SADDAM HUSSEIN
BOOKS
LOCAL AUTHOR
NO WAR
NEW STATESMAN
SPECTATOR
BLOODY WAR! I HOPE IT WON'T AFFECT MY BOOK SIGNING ON MONDAY!
THIS COULD BE NASTY!
HAMPSTEAD HEATH

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

Select Committee On The Very Important Issue Of Self-Regulation By The Press

Mr Gerald Kaufperson (Chairman): Mr Moron, you are the editor, are you not, of the Daily Mirror. Can you please tell the Committee...

Mr Piers Moron *(for it is he):* Don't you threaten me, you bald bastard. I know where you live and a lot more besides...

Kaufperson: Mr Moron, I must ask you to remember that you are appearing before this very important committee of very important MPs, of which I am the most important.

Moron: Shut up you four-eyed git and stop poncing around. The British tabloid press, of which the Daily Mirror is the finest example, has never served the British public, not to mention the entire human race, better than it is doing now...

Kaufperson: It ill behoves you, Mr Moron, to make these uncouth interruptions. I must warn you that you are not in your office at the Daily Moron now, and that...

Moron: ... the tabloids today are wholly responsible, non-intrusive, sensitive and dedicated to nothing but the highest standards of decency, truth and probity, and if you don't put that in your effing report I will make up some filth about your private life and run it on the front page.

Kaufperson: I am indebted to you, Mr Moron. No further questions. Call the next witness, Miss Rebekah Wade. Miss Wade, you are, are you not, the Editor of the Sun newspaper?

Miss Wadinginfilth *(for it is she)*: Nah, that is Mr Rupert Murdoch. I'm just paid to put in what he tells me. A very clever man.

Kaufperson: I put it to you, Miss Wade, that you have paid money to the police for confidential information?

Wade: 'course I have, everyone does it. *(Mobile goes off noisily as Ms Wade studies txt msg from 'drty dggr'.)* I now realise that the Sun newspaper has never paid members of the police service for information as this would be contrary to our Code of Ethics.

Kaufperson: There seems to be some element of ambiguity in your answer to the Committee, Miss Wade.

Wade: Shutupyaface, baldilocks! I'm sure we can pay some copper to name and shame you as one of them...

Kaufperson: I am indebted to you, Miss Wade. I think we can leave it there *(contd column 94)*

THAT ROYAL HERNIA OPERATION TIMETABLE IN FULL

Monday	Prince Charles is operated on and surgeons will remove the swelling.
Monday night	The swelling will be passed onto Michael Fawcett.
Tuesday	The swelling will disappear out of the back door of St James's Palace into an unmarked white van.
Friday	The swelling will be on sale at a local antiques shop.

ALTHOUGH TARZAN WAS RAISED IN THE JUNGLE BY APES, HE WAS STILL BRITISH

NEW FROM WARS 'Я' US

NOT READY FOR ACTION MAN

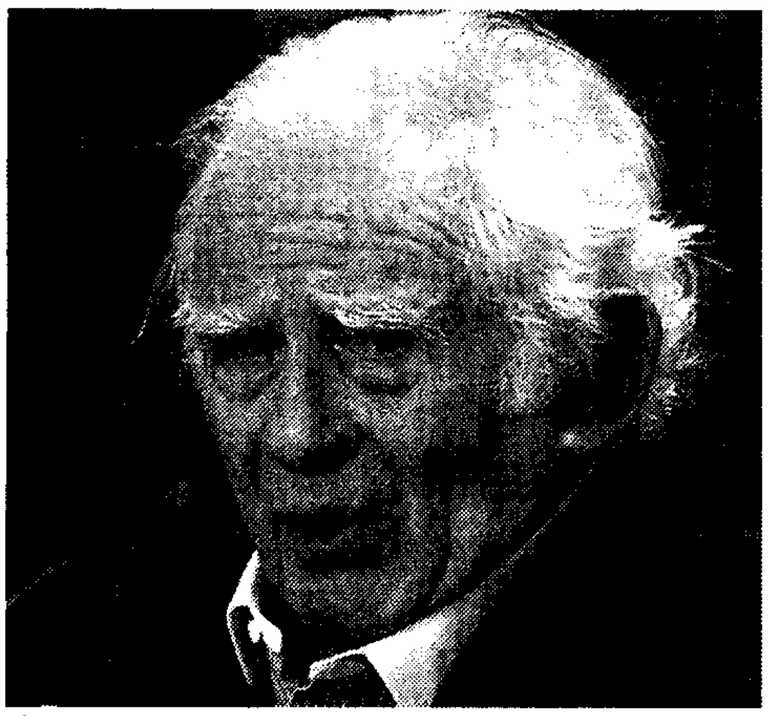
★ THIS is the latest state-of-the-art Gulf war model of Britain's fighting men.

Comes complete with:

- **Replica Jammed Gun**
- **Realistic Melting Boots**
- **Authentic Mobile Phone** (*because radio doesn't work!*)
- **No Sand Goggles!**
- **1 Sheet of Toilet Paper (to last campaign)**

★ *Yes! It's just like the real thing! Pull his ID tag and hear him say "We've got a job to do and we're going to do it as best we can. I can't comment on any problems with the tanks because they haven't arrived yet".*

DIARY



NORMAN MAILER
The Spooky Fart: Some Thoughts On Blowing Off

It begins with a curry, a red-hot curry, a curry as hot as a hot fire blazing on the red-hot plains of Arizona. Like Tolstoy before me, I like my curries hot. Hot and fast and heavy on the onion bhajis. And let me say this. I have the most profound respect for Leo Tolstoy, a respect every bit as profound – probably several inches profounder – as he had for me. The guy taught me how to write, dammit, and no two-bit no-hoper can take that piece of good luck away from him. And if I have eaten more and better curries than that great but flawed novelist ever did, if I have wrestled longer with the Beef Madras, floating headlong in my own perspiration – well, hell, that's the way it goes.

Other writers have supped on curry before me, writers as great if not as great as I, novelists and poets who have clutched their quills firm in their fists each damn morn, writers who, with the iron willpower of the Gods, have tugged and squeezed and pounded words, words, and yet more words out onto the blank pages beneath them, and by so doing have made the bitch sweat, thereby gaining redemption for the whole damned human race. Shakespeare. I have long been in the profoundest state of gratitude for his influence. Shakespeare. Will Shakespeare. Being a writer is to commune with Shakespeare. Did the Bard consume curry, burning hot in its profound intensity? It is not known. But if he did – as I believe him to have done – then he too will have experienced the corporeal consequences that reverberate down the stench-filled centuries.

I do not think I exaggerate. If I should e'er exaggerate, may my novelist's hand be cut off and fed to the masses with a mighty selection of popadoms harvested from the urns of my blooded tears. The young novelist stepping into the ring for the very first time should heed well this advice. Writing a novel is like eating the hottest curry with the gloves off. It is an act best performed with both fists flying, and just as the novel needs its main protagonists and perhaps one or two minor female characters too, so the hottest curry needs its meats and perhaps one or two fruit-based condiments, peeled and ready for licking, goddammit. So the veteran novelist, despised and acclaimed, feted and neglected, his fingers gnarled with calluses from the toil of a hundred novels, finishes his Madras Curry with a plate as clean as a sheet before a whore has performed her crafts upon it. He has consumed five courses, and come out on top. Vidal – a pansy who wrestled long and hard with flab only to emerge the loser – could only ever eat two courses. Capote fared little better, and ended up dead. But then Vidal is a major minor writer and Capote is a minor major writer. But Mailer – Mailer is made of tougher stuff. Mailer sits back in his velveteen seat, lets his guard down for a second, lunges at the beer, and drains the glass in six gulps, like a man.

And then he feels it coming, emerging fast and furious from somewhere deep within his own bowels. The wind it is. It is the wind.

The veteran writer's first reaction is to keep it in, to take it by the horns, wrestle it to the ground and push it back where it belongs. To ignore the travails of oncoming wind would be like ignoring a naked women when the curtains are open wide.

I tussle long and hard with the wind. I know as no man has ever known that this still-harnessed wind is searching high and low for its exit, battering on every hatch, and I know, too, that this is an exit it must not be permitted, goddammit, to make. Tolstoy understood the wind, and so too did Dostoievsky. Deep in my novelist's pants, I know that I understand it too, its furtive quest for release, its wholehearted pursuit of freedom, its unforgiving need to erupt at any moment.

PHWAAAARRRRPPPPP!

It rips through the air like nylon panties off the ass of a bitch on heat.

PHWAAAARRRRPPPPP!

Heedless of the encrusted needs of human decorum, it splutters and whistles around that two-bit room ablaze with all the frantic appetite of a young woman with full, profound breasts in search of a veteran novelist.

PHWAAARRRRRPPPPP!

Thrice it blows, and thrice it is denied, like the guy named Peter in the New Testament (a work that arguably predates but does not, I think, supersede my own).

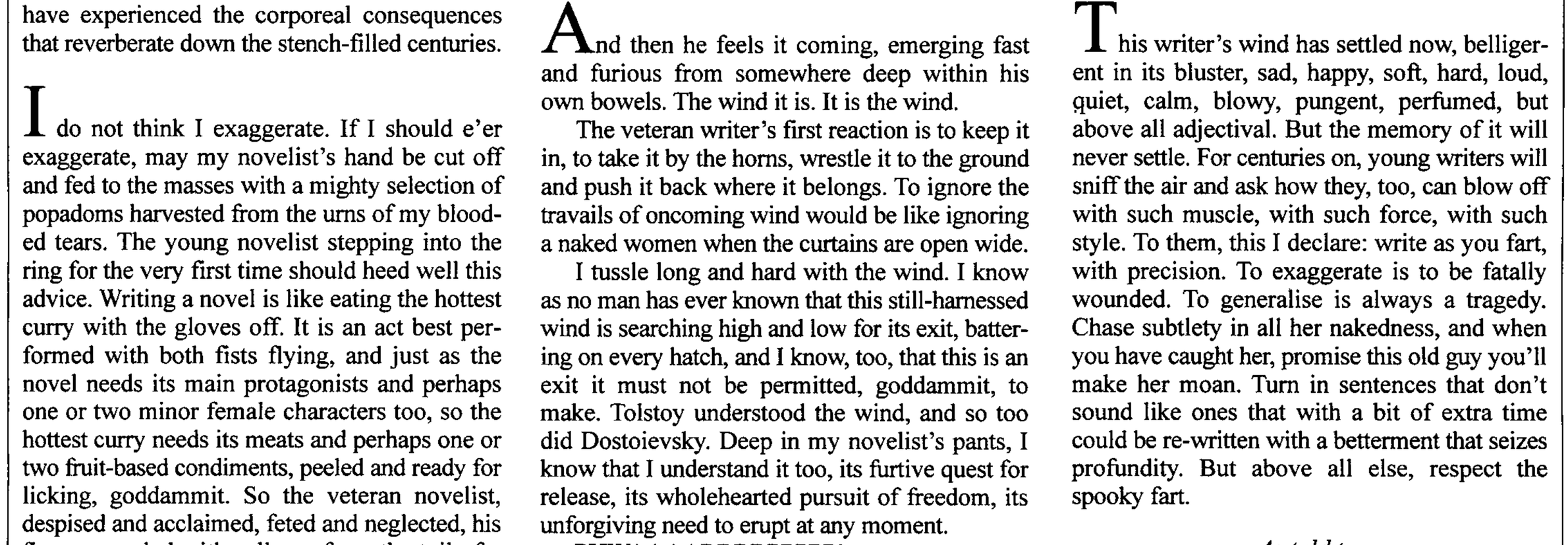
It is a blast from the writerly pants equal in intensity to Henry Miller at his most powerful, the most thrilling sound to be heard in World Culture since those four opening notes of Beethoven's Fifth, a godly gust, a poopin' rattler resonant enough to bring even the wildest and wickedest woman to heel.

Yes, I am done.

The effect is palpable and unspeakable. Believe me, gunfire in the treacherous heat of the tropical jungle was never as lethal as this. Other diners in the ever-more-odoriferous restaurant reach deep and profound into their trousers for some kind of kerchief to draw like a harlot's veil across their all-too-open noses. Waiters stagger back and forth like young hussies in a drunken chorus line, their trays clattering to the ground, spilling all over the place, like so many headless soldiers.

This writer's wind has settled now, belligerent in its bluster, sad, happy, soft, hard, loud, quiet, calm, blowy, pungent, perfumed, but above all adjectival. But the memory of it will never settle. For centuries on, young writers will sniff the air and ask how they, too, can blow off with such muscle, with such force, with such style. To them, this I declare: write as you fart, with precision. To exaggerate is to be fatally wounded. To generalise is always a tragedy. Chase subtlety in all her nakedness, and when you have caught her, promise this old guy you'll make her moan. Turn in sentences that don't sound like ones that with a bit of extra time could be re-written with a betterment that seizes profundity. But above all else, respect the spooky fart.

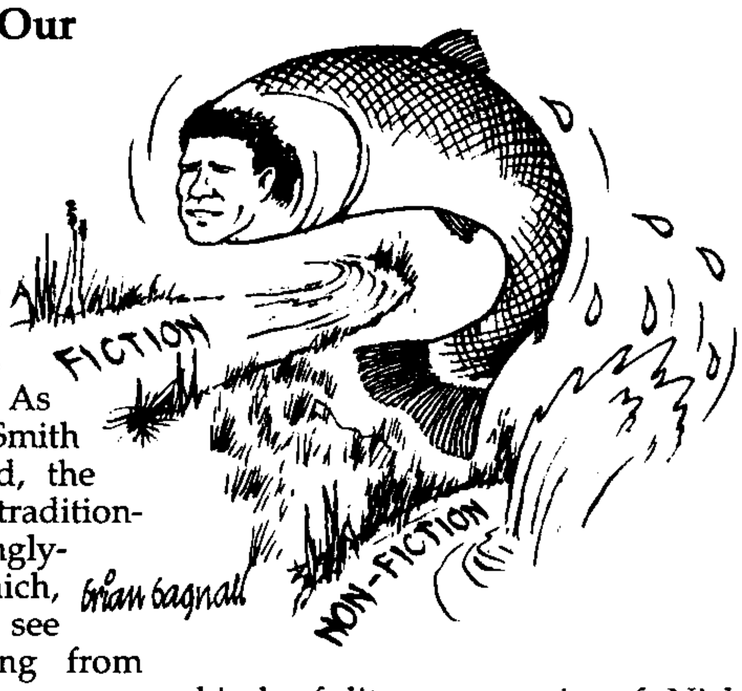
As told to
CRAIG BROWN



Literary Review

Over Eggersed

You Shall Know Our Velocity
Dave Eggers
(Hamish Hamilton, £16.99)



APART from writer's block, the most fearsome literary obstacle is Second-Book Syndrome. As Donna Tartt and Zadie Smith have both recently found, the lavishly-praised debut is traditionally succeeded by a sneeringly-received follow-up which, even more painfully, can see some reviewers retreating from their fondness for the first.

The risk is high enough with a second novel from a first-time novelist but many writers now double the jeopardy by switching genres before returning to the bookstores. Because publishers tend to make their money from non-fiction but hold the novel to be the highest form of endeavour, the fashion now is for star memoirists or biographers to be nudged towards fiction. Successful fact-packers including Andrea Ashworth, Edward Platt and Steven Poole are all reported to be working on fiction now.

But the biggest of the fish trying to jump streams is Dave Eggers. Three years ago, he published a memoir which somehow survived its critic-baiting title *A Heart-Breaking Work Of Staggering Genius* (*AHWOSG*, to its real fans) to win prizes and become a bestseller.

The success was deserved because Eggers subverted an entire genre. Cursed by his life with the kind of material which would normally be the source for an *Angela's Ashes*-type gloom-buster – both parents dead of cancer within months, leaving him to bring up an eight-year-old brother alone – the writer instead produced a comic post-modernist romp in which the jokes began in the copyright line and continued through pseudo-footnotes and joke indices.

Because *AHWOSG* was deliberately riddled with exaggerations and evasions, you can see why editors encouraged Eggers towards fiction. Even so, it's a dangerous border to cross. Eggers is a kind of literary cousin of Nick Hornby – Dave publishes the old gooner's books in the US and the list-meister interviewed Eggers at the Royal Festival Hall to publicise the new book – and Hornby provides an example of how the fact/fiction crossover is best accomplished. The trick is to simply write the same book again: memoir about dysfunctional north London obsessive who likes football/novel about anally-retentive Islington list-maker who loves pop.

Eggers has largely followed this advice. Like Eggers's previous memoir, *You Shall Know Our Velocity* is drenched in death. Three deaths are referred to in the opening 14 words and as one of these is the future extinction of the narrator, it's also clear that the author is continuing the playful games which made his name. The reader might have guessed this anyway because – the multi-skilled Eggers also designs his own books – the text starts on the front-cover and then continues across what would normally be the copyright and colophon page.

This is all pretty good fun but the aspects which are given to memoirs but which a novel needs to find are a narrative and characters. Eggers has gone picaresque, coming up with the notion that a man who has recently come into some money – through being employed as the model in a light-bulb commercial – is so disgusted by his flushness that he decides to fly around the world in a week, trying to give all the money away.

Even that fantasy is self-referential and post-modernist. Aficionados of Eggers know that he was so discomfited by the millions brought in by *AHWOSG* that he established various foundations and writing schools to lighten his pockets.

In common with his English cousin, Eggers is best at riffs and lists. There's a tremendous passage here about airline schedules. But the point of *AHWOSG* was that its games and playfulness had a purpose: an ironist was slowly circling around an experience which was literally beyond a joke. Without that under-pinning of reality, *You Shall Know Our Velocity* is just japes on the page and reads like a book that had to be written from reasons of publishing urgency rather than anything else.

Books & Bookmen

■ SPEAKING at the conference of the Independent Publishers' Guild in Cumbria recently, Faber md Stephen Page stressed how important it was for small publishers to be innovative and quick off the mark.

It would seem from Faber's initial claims for its *101 Poems Against War* that the book is a perfect example of such speed, the poems having been selected in three weeks, following Harold Pinter's original suggestion, and the book having been rush-published last week. Now, however, the publisher claims Pinter had the idea in November and that it had been working on it since then. There was, however, no indication of such a book in the Faber catalogue or in any advance literature.

Could the change of story have anything to do with the emergence of a rival, similarly-titled book called *100 Poets Against the War*? This other book was originated by Todd Swift, the poetry editor of a politics and literature website called nthposition. He sent out a call for poems to respected poets such as Adrian Mitchell on 20 January and the first online edition appeared a week later, with weekly updates after that. Traffic was so high that the small Salt Publishing imprint offered to do a book edition, with proceeds going to Amnesty International.

Then, suddenly, the Faber book appeared, apparently from nowhere. The crucial difference is that the Salt book is all-new, all-original, especially-commissioned work, whereas the Faber book is an anthology of poems many of whose authors are long since dead. So either Faber took longer to get its book out than it initially claimed, or it is being economical with the actualité to cover up the fact that it has clumsily derailed a far smaller publisher's genuinely innovative efforts. Is all fair in love, war and poetry publishing?

■ READERS of Andrew "Brillo Pad" Neill's soporific *The Business* had their usual Sabbath snooze ruined last weekend by a garish full-page advert, printed in bright red, promoting a motivational seminar hosted by American business guru, author Gary Hamel.

The event, at the London Hilton on 28 March, is sponsored by *The Business* itself, so clearly Brillo has a high opinion of Gary Hamel's brilliance. Nor is he alone: the advert quotes the *Economist*, which called Hamel "the world's reigning strategy guru". But it omits to add that this description appeared many years ago, and the *Economist* may well have revised its opinion since then.

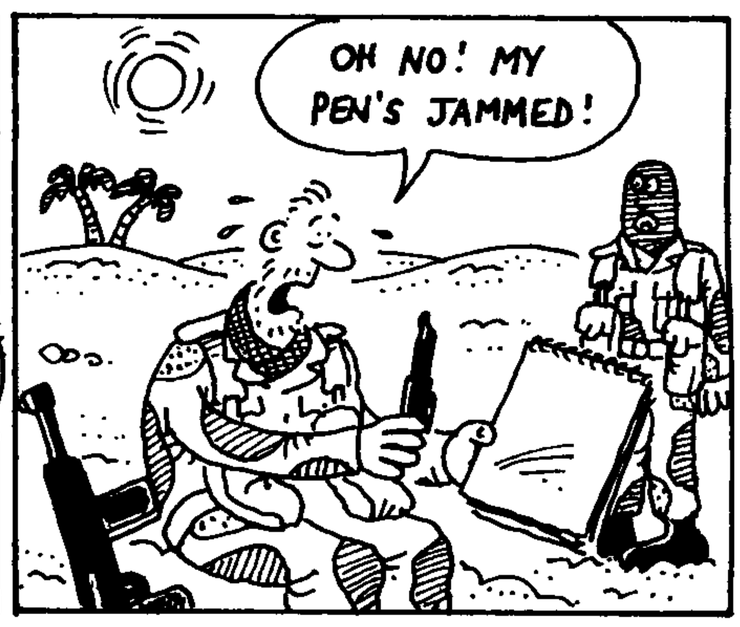
During the 1990s Hamel made his name by saying that most businesses were boring and uninspired. Their only hope of survival was to learn from the great success story of modern times, a corporation with "a genius for innovation". He raved over this firm in countless speeches and interviews. His book *Leading the Revolution*, published in the autumn of 2000, singled it out as a "radical new business model", with "fluid organisational boundaries" and "an incredible track record of creating bold new businesses".

As he explained: "Enron has achieved this almost magical mix of entrepreneurship with the ability to leverage enormous scale and discipline to get things done." *Whoops!* Hamel's publisher lost most of the huge advance it paid for *Leading the Revolution*, and the man himself was left with several large omelettes on his face. The desperation with which *The Business* is advertising his London gig, less than a fortnight before the event, suggests that few business executives fancy spending £795 a head – or £895 if you want a reserved seat "in a premium area of the auditorium" – to listen to a fad-surfing buffoon. Still, no doubt Hamel will be consoled by the thought that "Brillo Pad", at least, has kept the faith.

■ SARAH SANDS' novel *Playing the Game* might have been feted by the Telegraph group of newspapers (for which she works – see last *Eye*), but there was no such kindness from her former employer, the *Evening Standard*.

Lowri Turner, who reviewed the book, admitted that she "wanted to like this book – which has already been reviewed warmly elsewhere" on account of having worked for Sands, and having her own book out. Unfortunately she felt unable to oblige.

"The central character…[is] a TV presenter. This is what I am these days (part-time anyway) and what Sarah Sands is not," Turner notes.



Having "transposed her story to the sexier TV oeuvre... it feels like an outsider looking in," Turner observes. What then is the setting for Turner's book, *Stripped Bare*? You've guessed it. It's the "sexy" world of television. The Telegraph papers have yet to pass judgement on *Stripped Bare*, but the outcome is awaited with interest.

■ ONE of Macmillan's highest-profile academic projects in recent years has been the updating of the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* for a new print edition and a "continuously updated" online version.

Now, however, the company has offloaded the whole Grove business to Oxford University Press, as it "no longer fitted with its scholarly publishing programme". A curious statement considering the great fanfare that heralded the new edition three years ago; but it hides a multitude of sins at Macmillan's academic division, Palgrave.

The problems began at the start of 2000 when Holtzbrinck, Macmillan's German owner, called Macmillan CEO Richard "Barking" Charkin, informing him that the *New Grove* would appear in November that year. The trouble was that the project would be nowhere near ready to meet the German deadline, but the distinguished *Grove* editor Stanley Sadie's protests were brushed aside, and another editor was enlisted – Laura Macy, an American academic who had just failed to get tenure at Penn State University.

Macy and *Grove Dictionary of Art* editor Jane Turner enlisted a team of Oxbridge students to do a rush job on the proof-reading. Then Turner declared herself unable to work with Macy – who had, for some reason, acquired the nickname of "Fubsie" and resigned, at which "Fubsie" took over the *Dictionary of Art* as well, a subject in which she has no qualifications.

The *New Grove* came out in November 2000 as demanded, but the greenhorn proof-readers had succeeded in adding more errors than they had removed. Thus, the Juillard academy in New York was referred to as the "Julliard", while the composer Kurt Schwertsik was killed off prematurely by a proof-reader who confused the German words for "premiere" and "death", only being exhumed after legal threats. The article on William Walton refers to him as "Mr" rather than "Sir", etc, etc.

However, the online edition has not proved any better, the updating being rather less than continuous. Some articles appear to be semi-translated, others omit details such as birth dates. The transfer to OUP is not expected to improve matters much. Despite being welcomed by OUP head Henry Reece as "works of scholarship of the first rank... It is difficult to think of any other books... that have a better fit with our reference publishing program [sic]", OUP has long since offloaded its experienced music editors.

'Bookworm'

REMAINDERS OF THE DAY

■ THE BOOK: *Trowel and Error* — the autobiography of TV gardener-cum-novelist Alan Titchmarsh.

Published by Hodder last September, having been bought for the usual loopy high six-figure showbiz advance, its recommended retail price was £18.99.

Now yours for a mere £6.99 at Panda Books in Lowestoft, Suffolk.

WHAT YOU DIDN'T MISS, Pt 94

The Light of Day
Graham Notvery-Swift

...Rain outside again. Its hiss. The noise a crisp packet makes when you open it. That a biro makes when, regretfully, you lay it down. I notice things. He said that, once before. The agent. "You notice things, Graham."

"It's my job," I said. "Noticing things. I'm a writer. Take water, for instance. It's just melted ice."

"That's good," he said. "I like that." I could see his point. He knows what he likes, the agent. Maybe he likes what he knows, too. Like Genesis, in that song.

The agent. A man in an office. At the end of the Northern line. Outside, the rain again. April showers. Niagara Falls. I live in Wimbledon. After Putney. But before Raynes Park. You'll have been there. It's somewhere to write about. And in the early days I even liked walking round it. Leaving the house. Taking a stroll. Seeing the sights.

She puts her head round the door. "Good day, love? Written much?"

A simple question. A simple question, that needs an answer. If we could answer all the questions, then they wouldn't need asking. It stands to reason.

"Ten words," I say. "Different ones, too. Some long ones. Some short ones. A couple of definite articles. A personal pronoun. It's a start. In a week there'll be a paragraph. In a few years – who knows? A short story? A novella even. I'm not counting. Words are like chickens. I know that much. You just don't count them."

Then I stop. She goes away. Silence. It's the loudest sound on earth.

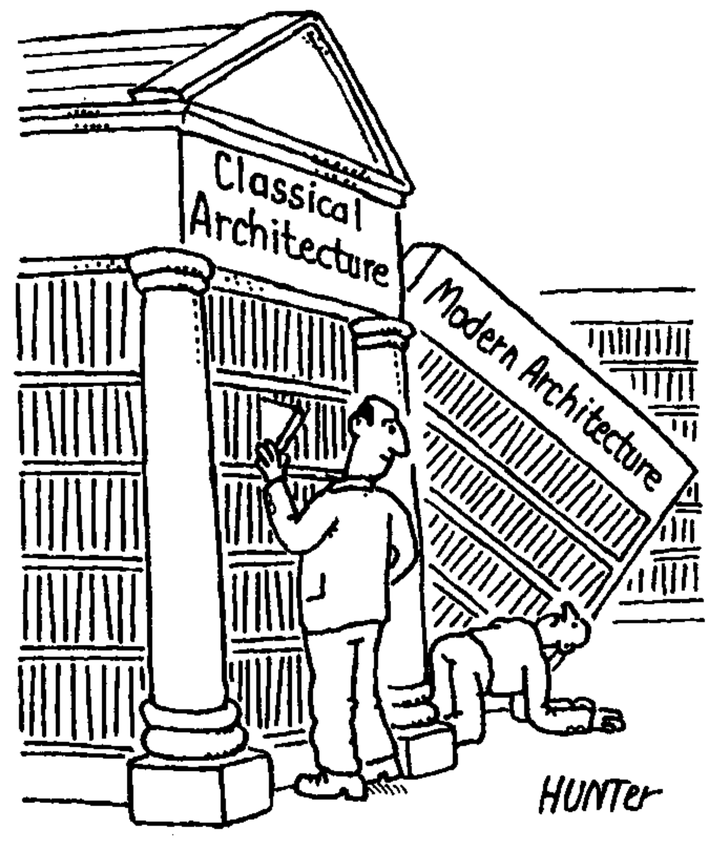
Sometimes fate steps in. You win some prizes. You get a lot of money. And then people start to want things. Always wanting things. Like the publisher. On the phone. Always ringing.

"Graham! Haven't heard from you in a while..."

Hasn't anyone told him? That it's a seven-year stretch. With no remission. And no visiting hours. That the words don't write themselves.

"Don't mind me," he says, "but you ought to get out more. That's what the critics say."

"Forget it," I say, above the noise of the humming, drumming, ruthless, sluiceless rain. "What do they know? Less is more. More or less." *(contd p94)*



Pseuds Corner

...I happened to have a bit of cold black rice and some Vietnamese dipping sauce left over in the fridge one day, along with a fresh consignment of raw, peeled prawns...I'm telling you this simply to illustrate that this is what real cooking is about: you just go with what you've got.

NIGELLA LAWSON – 'Prawn and Black Rice Salad with Vietnamese Dressing', ***Forever Summer***

My mind accepts no boundaries, obeys no rules. It is an open savannah, a mountain range...a darting dolphin that breaks through the meniscus of accepted norms to flex its muscular body in the open air.

NEIL BLACKEY, Merrill Lynch's retiring £1m a year media analyst, on the challenges that lie ahead, interviewed by Chris Blackhurst, ***Evening Standard***

After Hill had been inarticulate during his original interview for Oxford, Galbraith went to his room later that evening with another don and staged an argument to get him to talk. "What good thing ever came out of the Church of England?" shouted Galbraith at one point. "Swift?" said Hill, in a trembling voice. Hill later said: "They treated it as the most brilliant remark they had ever heard."

***Times* obituary of Christopher Hill**

Divided Cities: Cosmopolitan Promises and Multicultural Realities
Professor Stuart Hall
He will argue that Western cities simultaneously awaken the dream of a vernacular cosmopolitanism from below and the dystopia of an ethnically divided, embattled and exoticized urban space. His lecture will eschew older binary models of the city for a more ambiguous, overlapping and contested account, in which openings and closures occur in the same terrain.

2003 Oxford Amnesty Lectures

It [Katherine Hamnett's anti-war T-shirt] exists at the delicate point where social commentary meets haute couture. The composition is deceptively simple. Hamnett took great care in selecting the alphabet with which she was going to work. Showing poised restraint, she opted for Roman's stark simplicity, not the swirling intricacies of Arabic script or the oriental mysteries of Mandarin. Then she took some letters from it and, after deliberation, placed the letters in an order to spell out words. The letters – showing a willingness to think big, think Gherkin, think Richard Rogers – are in very now CAPITALS *[continues in this vein]*

ROBBIE MILLEN
The Times

Pseuds Corporate

The college recognizes the role building plays in offering integrated, innovative and client-centred services that promote sustainable employability within the local economy and in meeting the skills needs of business to enhance competitiveness. It seeks to provide a unified gateway or portal that enables demand-led workforce development, bringing together the competitiveness agenda for developing skills in enterprise and innovation and the needs of local businesses by raising the aspirations and confidence of individuals and providing them with clear-access pathways to the job opportunities of the 21st century.

DAME PAT MORGAN-WEBB of New College, Nottingham, ***The Times***

CONTRIBUTORS: Katy Jones, Judith Salomon, George McNally, Peter Jones, Jeff Dover, Vivienne Foster.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

WEAPONS OF MASS DECEPTION

The Niger Forgery

THE UN weapons inspectors are not just checking up on Iraq – they are causing havoc with western intelligence. And perhaps the most embarrassing revelation so far is that the documents that provided the inspectors with the most direct "evidence" of Iraq's procurement of nuclear weapons were forged.

Last September the British government published one of its notorious dossiers about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. The foreword was by the prime minister, who boasted that the "assessed intelligence" in the dossier "established beyond doubt that Saddam continues in his efforts to develop nuclear weapons".

By far the most powerful evidence for this assertion was on page 25 of the dossier, as follows: "Iraq's known holdings of processed uranium are under IAEA [International Atomic Energy Authority] supervision. But there is intelligence that Iraq had sought the supply of significant quantities of uranium from Africa. Iraq has no active civil nuclear power programme or nuclear power plants, and therefore has no legitimate reason to acquire uranium."

An IAEA spokeswoman in Vienna explained to the *Eye* that this piece of intelligence was "by far the most important evidence that Iraq was seeking to rebuild its nuclear programme". All the rest of the evidence, she explained, was about "dual use" equipment that could, but not necessarily must, be used for nuclear weapons.

The inspectors, under the director-general of the IAEA, Dr Mohamed ElBaradei, made sustained inquiries into this "intelligence". They hired what Dr ElBaradei called a "specially-qualified team of international centrifuge manufacturing experts" to help with the investigation. His report went on: "The investigation was centred on documents provided by a number of states that pointed to an agreement between Niger and Iraq for the sale of uranium between 1999 and 2001."

So the inspectors asked the governments of Iraq and Niger about these agreements. Both countries said there were no such agreements. Iraqi government officials provided a credible explanation for the visit of an Iraqi official to Niger in 1999. Well, considering the issue was the illegal sale of uranium, they would, wouldn't they? But wait. The ElBaradei report goes on: "The IAEA was also able to review correspondence coming from various bodies of the government of Niger, and to compare the form, format, contents and signatures of that correspondence with those of the alleged procurement-related documentation. Based on thorough analysis, the IAEA concluded, with the concurrence of outside experts, that these documents – which formed the basis for the reports of recent uranium transactions between Iraq and Niger – are in fact not authentic. We have therefore concluded that these specific allegations are unfounded."

The *Eye* asked the IAEA spokeswomen in Vienna about this passage. She was even more forthright than her director-general. The documents that so comprehensively deceived the intelligence services of so many countries, including Britain, she said, "were forged". Indeed, they were "a blatant attempt to deceive us". Who forged them? The spokeswoman could not say. Was the IAEA going to open an investigation into this blatant deceit that might have led directly to war? She could not say.

The British foreign office brusquely rejects these remarkable forgery allegations. It insists there was evidence from other sources that Saddam is seeking to arm himself with nuclear weapons. It concedes – it has no alternative – that these crucial documents were forged, but does not know, or will not say, by whom. And anyway it points out that its own dossier last September, though it makes a lot of the Niger/Iraq connection, does not specifically refer to documents. The FO's response suggests that it does not accept the conclusion of the inspectors and their experts that the documents were forged. It says: "We have faith in the origins of the material as an indicator of Iraqi intentions to procure uranium." Faith in forgery!

Director-general of the IAEA, Dr Mohamed ElBaradei

The British Gyroscopes

THE British government's case for war with Iraq rests heavily on the evidence of Hussein Kamal, Iraq's most senior defector, to prove that Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction.

However, when notes of Kamal's interview with the weapons inspectors were leaked, they provided yet more evidence firstly that Britain had armed Iraq in the first place and secondly that the BBC can always be relied upon for some straightforward pro-government censorship.

Kamal, Saddam's son-in-law, drove into Jordan in 1995, hoping to lead the Iraqi opposition. He was the minister in charge of Iraq's weapons programme; and he provided extensive details of Iraq's abortive nuclear and anthrax programmes.

Many of the details appeared in the British government's dossier on Iraq last September; and foreign secretary Jack Straw's speeches are peppered with references to Kamal's testimony. However, when the original notes of Kamal's interviews became public in February, they were full of detail not revealed by Straw or his boss Tony Blair.

Iraq's missile programme – one of the prime minister's six reasons for war on Iraq – relies partly on gyroscopes made in Britain. Recent press reports have highlighted Iraqi imports of Ukrainian and Russian gyroscopes, which are essential for rocket guidance. But they have scrupulously avoided quoting what General Kamal actually told the inspectors in 1995. An extract from the leaked tapes runs as follows:

Kamal: *They also ordered gyroscopes in the United Kingdom. Are you aware of this?*

Nikita Smidovich responded that UNSCOM "*was aware that the gyroscope parts were ordered by Iraq through Mr Aws Hassan and his company, Cimarron. These parts were to be manufactured by different British companies but primarily at Norcroft.*"

The tapes, originally uncovered by *Newsweek* magazine, were republished in Britain by Radio 4's *Today* programme. When Radio 4 put a copy of the notes on its website, all reference to Britain, Cimarron and Norcroft were obliterated. So the relevant Radio 4 website reads like this:

General Kamal said "*...They also ordered gyroscopes in XXXX. Are you aware of this?*" Nikita Smidovitch of UNSCOM responded they were aware "*that the gyroscope parts were ordered by Iraq through MR XXXXX and his company XXXX. These parts were to be manufactured by different XXXX companies but primarily at XXXX.*"

Private Eye asked the BBC why it had censored references to British involvement in arming Saddam while leaving uncensored Kamal's testimony about US, French, Russian, Chinese and Czech support. We were simply told to "watch this space". We've watched this space with great interest... and the censored passages are still there.

The *Eye* also contacted Norcroft's new owner. The firm has changed hands twice since the gyroscopes were manufactured and shipped in the three years up to 1991. It had no comment. In 1995 *Flight International* reported that HM customs had arrested five people following an investigation into the Norcroft exports, but had not mounted a prosecution "on legal advice". Those arrested included "a west London trading firm and its Iraq born proprietor" which "could not be named for legal reasons".

Lieutenant Colonel Richard Glazebrook

HM customs told the *Eye* that no current personnel could recall the prosecution, as customs "had changed substantially since then. The case is too old, customs has moved on".

Cimarron, which was based in west London, is now in liquidation and the *Eye* was unable to trace its directors.

Nikita Smidovich still works for the weapons inspectors. The *Eye* asked the UN if his assertion about Norcroft's gyroscopes was accurate. Its spokesman replied that the issue would be investigated further "but I can't imagine why we would disagree with Nikita".

Both customs and intelligence were worried about British gyroscope exports to Iraq before 1995. According to the Scott report, customs was investigating an unnamed firm for sending gyroscopes described by the manufacturers' brochure as "for guidance systems in rocket-propelled vehicles". However, prosecution was seen as "a difficulty" and a "non-starter" because of confusion over licensing.

The gyroscope issue was raised in the Scott inquiry on the sale of arms to Iraq. Lieutenant Colonel Richard Glazebrook was the unhappy officer appointed to ensure that exports of arms from Britain would never endanger British troops in the field. He fought a running and losing battle with the arms manufacturers, their salesmen and their many supporters in the department of trade, the foreign office and the ministry of defence. Again and again, he reported to his seniors about what he regarded as highly dangerous arms exports to Iraq, including gyroscopes "from a dozen countries, including Germany and the UK". The Scott inquiry concluded gloomily that Glazebrook's report was "unfortunately allowed to wither on the vine".

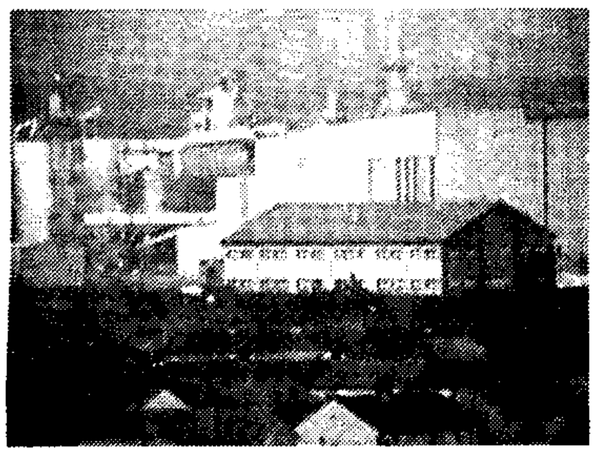
TAX BREAK?

A happy solution has emerged to what is now known in the treasury as the "Montagu problem". It may not be necessary to sack Sir Nicholas Montagu, chairman of the Inland Revenue, for his execrable performance and deception of his ministers over the sale of Inland Revenue buildings to a company in a tax haven.

The bumptious knight is 60 next year and due for comfortable retirement. Curiously, the prospect does not appeal to him. In an interview in the February issue of the influential monthly magazine *Accountancy*, Sir Nicholas gives full rein to his legendary modesty and humility.

"I would like another job. I like running organisations not out of megalomania but because I like dealing with people... I was an academic before I joined the civil service. If a university would be prepared to take me on as its vice-chancellor for three or four years or if there were a big charity that thought I had something to offer, I'd be happy to do that."

Loyal staff at the Inland Revenue have been hunting around for a suitable position for their chairman when he retires, but unhappily there is no major university in Bermuda, the Dutch Antilles, or the British Virgin Islands.



POLLUTION

UNCOOL FOR KATS

PEOPLE living in the shadow of an accident-prone chipboard factory in Kirkby, Merseyside, claim their health is suffering thanks to a cocktail of chemical pollutants.

A campaign group, Knowsley Against Toxic Sonae (KATS), has gathered evidence of worsening respiratory health, allergies and skin problems which residents attribute to fumes from the factory. These included formaldehyde which is an irritant, asthma trigger and possibly carcinogenic.

The Sonae factory has been plagued with problems since it opened three years ago next to a densely populated area. There have been three explosions, one of which left a worker critically injured and blew a hole through the external wall of the factory.

In February Sonae pleaded guilty to health and safety offences and was fined £30,000 after an accident in which a worker was almost crushed to death in machinery, suffering broken ribs and a punctured lung.

In October more than 10,000 tonnes of woodchippings stored outside the factory combusted and there began a six-week, slow-burning bonfire. The only advice the local director of public health gave was for residents to keep their doors and windows shut while dust clogged the air.

Meanwhile, the Environment Agency told the *Eye* it was investigating several incidents relating to the factory including the possible pollution of two local rivers. Knowsley's department of environmental health, which approved the planning application for the factory, has been far less enthusiastic about monitoring or regulating it. KATS has called in the local government ombudsman to investigate the department for possible maladministration.

The local primary care trust disagrees with KATS, saying there is no evidence of increased hospital admissions since the Sonae factory was built and noting that the area already had a history of similar health problems before the firm arrived.

Sonae's latest idea to alleviate problems is to build a higher chimney. It is by no means clear that a higher stack will do the trick; but that hasn't stopped Knowsley council supporting Sonae's application to the regional development agency to put several hundred thousand pounds of taxpayers' money towards building it.

Of course, were a taller chimney stack in place, Sonae would be able to install an MDF line at the plant – producing even more toxic chemicals – if it should ever choose to do so.

ARMS TO ZIMBABWE

STUMPED FOR AN ANSWER

THE English cricket team crashes out of the world cup largely as a result of its decision, backed fiercely by the British government, to boycott the game in Zimbabwe. But the British government meanwhile maintains a strict silence on its apparently friendly relationships between British arms companies and... the government of Zimbabwe.

This silence was the central feature of a Commons debate on 5 March, led off by Norman Lamb, Liberal Democrat MP for Norfolk North. Mr Lamb referred to the recent reports of the UN panel of experts into the involvement of army commanders, businessmen and governments in the systematic and violent robbery of diamonds and precious metals from the Congo.

The Mugabe government was closely involved in this conspiracy, Mr Lamb claimed, and he asked a series of questions about the role of British business in supplying Zimbabwe with arms in defiance of sanctions. He named two men: the well-known arms dealer John Bredenkamp, whose British business is based in Sunningdale, Berkshire, and who, according to the UN report "has a history of clandestine military procurement"; and Andrew Smith "who manages Avient Air, which supplied six helicopters to the Kinshasa [Congo] government and contracted to perform bombing raids over the eastern Congo in 1999 and 2000".

For several months Mr Lamb has been pressing the government about contacts between Messrs Smith and Bredenkamp and British officials in London and Zimbabwe. He was told that in 2002 "two meetings and two telephone calls had taken place between John Bredenkamp and British high commission officials in Zimbabwe, but when I subsequently asked what was discussed at those meetings and who was present, I was told that the government were not prepared to answer my questions. Why not?"

As for Mr Smith, Norman Lamb was told in a series of parliamentary answers that Smith had had "several meetings with" and had made several phone calls to British diplomats in Harare in the past two years, and even met the defence attaché there in October 2001. He asked what these meetings and phone calls were about. The information was refused.

Mr Lamb also asked about the mysterious supply of Hawk spare parts made by BAE Systems to the Zimbabwe armed forces last year in clear breach of sanctions against that country. The BAE Systems chairman Richard Evans, said Mr Lamb, did not know where the spare parts came from. Did the government know?

The debate was answered not by the ministry of defence nor by the department of international development but by Dennis MacShane, the minister for Europe. In a typically bravura performance he refused point blank to take any interventions and managed not to answer a single one of Mr Lamb's questions. He had nothing to say about the government officials' conversations with John Bredenkamp or Andrew Smith; nothing to say about those BAE spare parts; nothing to say, even, about Mr Lamb's allegation that the former British high commissioner in Harare, Peter Longworth, had tried to get the arms embargo on Zimbabwe lifted.

Mr Lamb has written to the leader of the House to complain about all this. As the government would say, "It's just not cricket."

FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS...

■ **ASBESTOS DEATHS:** Though the British multinational Cape plc has finally agreed to pay £7.5m to the thousands of sick or dying South Africans poisoned by its lethal asbestos operations, this is less than half what it agreed to shell out two years ago after protracted court battles and it represents a hollow victory for the 7,000-plus victims.

Cape of course paid more to lawyers trying to thwart the claims for asbestos-induced lung disease. Hundreds have died while it prevaricated (200 have perished in the two years since Cape reneged on its initial agreement). And by the time the money is divided between so many victims it will amount to peanuts. Some victims though who went on to work for Gencor Ltd, a South African company which took over some of Cape's operations in 1979, will share an extra £3.21m which Gencor has put into the compensation pot.

■ **CAFCASS:** The committee on the lord chancellor's department has at last launched an inquiry into the mess that is Cafcass, the children and family services court agency set up two years ago to protect vulnerable children but which has lurched from crisis to crisis ever since.

Unfortunately those who might best tell MPs what is going wrong – disgruntled and frustrated staff and guardians – have been barred from making representations to the committee.

However, a leaked internal memo reveals much of the problem. There are around 2,000 children at the centre of care proceedings or traumatic family break-up who, because of staff shortages and lack of money, are still waiting to be allocated a guardian or court welfare officer.

Some children wait anything up to 12 weeks for a worker and then many more months after that for their case to proceed through court. (The children's act suggested cases should take no more than 13 weeks.)

The problem has been exacerbated by the departure of experienced court guardians, dismayed by what they see as a failing service to the children. Napo, the family court union, has already called for an urgent injection of cash to recruit and retain experienced staff to handle what it says are increasingly complex cases often involving abuse and violence in the home.

The internal Cafcass memo estimates it would take an extra £6m next year to sort the service out. Whether lord chancellor Lord Irvine, who promised MPs a year ago that he was on the case but has presided over a continuing deterioration, will find the money remains to be seen.

■ **VACCINES:** A new study in the US has found a link between vaccines containing mercury and neuro-developmental disorders such as autism. The research, by Dr Mark Geier and David Geier, will be published in the *Journal of the American Association of Physicians and Surgeons* and cause a storm of controversy.

Although the debate about mercury-based thimerosal in vaccines has been muted in the UK, in the US the preservative is at the centre of a multi-billion dollar lawsuit, similar to the MMR legal action here.

The new paper confirms findings of an unreleased study from the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) which found a relative risk of 2.48 between thimerosal exposures and autism. Studies in the US have already shown that infants who receive several vaccines containing thimerosal have been exposed to mercury levels more than 40 times higher than is considered safe.

Until now, proving the causal link with the ever increasing rise in autism has been elusive. In the new study, the researchers examined the records on the US register of vaccine reactions, known as the Vaers database, looking at the amount of mercury children received at various ages and analysing the relative risk of developmental disorders and heart disease for increasing doses.

The authors concluded: "This study provides strong epidemiological evidence for a link between increasing mercury from thimerosal-containing childhood vaccines and neuro-developmental disorders and heart disease."

Although the MMR vaccine does not contain the mercury-based preservative, the findings are still helpful to UK litigants who blame the triple-jab for their children's autism. This is partly because the children would have been exposed to mercury in some of their other childhood jabs and also because mercury has been proven to affect the immune system.

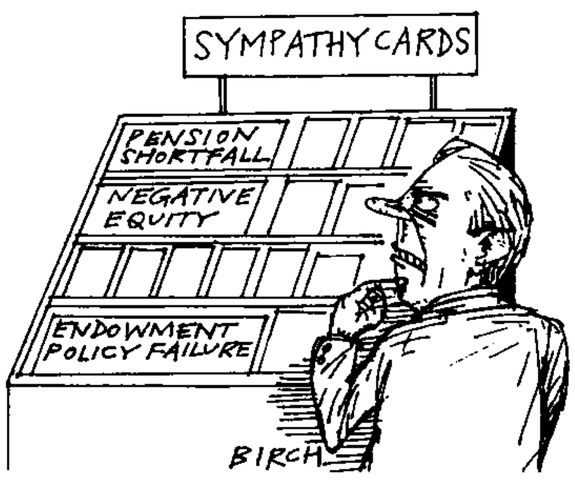
The basis of the MMR litigation is that the triple live virus jab can affect those children whose immune systems are already compromised. Mercury is one of several things infants can be exposed to, including antibiotics or infection, that may influence the way their bodies' immune system responds to live viral vaccines.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

ANY post-war Iraq is certain to see the emergence of some less than pristine figures from the back-stabbing world of Iraqi exile politics as the new faces in Baghdad. As in Afghanistan, Iraq's post-Saddam leaders – assuming the country does not implode like the former Yugoslavia in an orgy of faction fighting and score settling – will be largely those bought and paid for by Washington and London.

In Afghanistan these are only either American-cloned businessmen or warlords boosting the opium crop that Tony Blair claimed was a key reason for Britain declaring war on the Taliban. Iraq is very different. It not only has oil – the second largest reserves in the world from which US oil companies were already the hidden biggest single customer under the UN orchestrated oil for food programme – but a well developed and educated business elite, many of whom either fled Saddam or moved abroad to become part of his procurement and financial network.



As in post-war Germany and Japan, many of these individuals will be relied upon to provide the forest of fig leaves needed to hide what would be perceived as an illegal US occupation.

One of those Iraqi exiles from whom much is likely to be heard in coming weeks and months is Ahmad Chalabi, the Bush-backed but London-based head of the Iraqi National Congress. Unfortunately for his paymasters Chalabi is not the most popular figure inside Iraq or its neighbour Jordan. Not just because he is widely seen as an American stooge but because of his key role in the collapse of the Petra Bank – a banking crash which has left Iraq's would-be new leader accused of embezzlement and facing possible arrest in Jordan where he was sentenced to 22 years in prison, fined more than $50m and ordered to pay $178m compensation. Hardly the best reference for nation-building.

Chalabi comes from a wealthy Shi'ite family which fled Iraq in 1958 when the Ba'ath party overthrew the monarchy. He built up Petra Bank into neighbouring Jordan's third biggest bank. His family also opened associated banks in Lebanon, Switzerland and Washington.

The Chalabi empire flourished through the 80s as Saddam benefited from US and British support for his war with Iran – a smiling Donald Rumsfeld was pictured meeting the axis of evil. The bank lent extensively to those trading with Saddam. But the Jordanian economy dangerously overheated and in 1989 there was a major crisis when the Jordanian dinar collapsed.

A new central bank governor demanded that all local banks deposit 30 percent of their dollar holdings with the central bank. Petra was unable to comply. An internal investigation was launched. General manager Chalabi left in the boot of a car for Syria and next surfaced in Thailand. His chief currency dealer was arrested trying to board a plane for London with bank documents. A local banker commented: "Petra Bank survived for four years on the fringes of the law and through its loopholes. It committed many unorthodox banking transactions."

Petra was taken over and liquidated by the government to protect local depositors who had $300m in the bank. The official investigation uncovered largescale fraud including embezzlement, breaches of foreign exchange regulations, missing accounts, fictitious assets and illicit transactions in Jordan and abroad, according to the central bank.

Petra was said to have exceeded legal lending limits, opened branches without approval and failed to submit accounts to the central bank within the three-month time limit. Chalabi was said to have bought interests in local companies and acquired property in Jordan and abroad with bank funds which were registered to his family. There were disputes about foreign liabilities with Visa International, the Bank of Tokyo and the Federal Reserve Bank in Washington. Total losses at Petra have been estimated at up to $500m.

Petra's problems had been exacerbated by Chalabi's efforts to bail out his brothers in Lebanon and Switzerland. The Mebco banks there were closed. Chalabi's two brothers were given a suspended prison sentence in Switzerland three years go for presenting false documents.

In 1992 Chalabi was sentenced to 22 years hard labour in absentia by a state security court on 31 charges of embezzlement, theft, misuse of depositors' funds and speculation with the Jordanian currency. A civilian court also reportedly convicted Chalabi of embezzlement in 1994 over $2m transferred from the bank to a company controlled by his associates. Another court ruling in 1995 ordered him to pay $178m in damages. A further fine of $22m was reported later that year bringing to almost $250m with previous fines the amounts Chalabi was reportedly due to repay.

Chalabi has always vehemently denied any crime and blames Petra's closure on political in-fighting within the Jordanian royal family. His rise had owed much to his closeness with Crown Prince Hassan. He has tried unsuccessfully to have the conviction and sentence quashed. Not surprising given the way he is viewed in Jordan. Former central bank governor Mohammed Nabulsi denounced the man who would be Iraq's new leader as the "master cook" who had cooked the Petra books and "one of the most notorious crooks in the Middle East".

If Chalabi is Bush's favourite then the Iraqi exile with the greatest clout with Blair may well be Nadhmi Auchi, head of London-based but Luxembourg-registered General Mediterranean Holdings (GMH). It has former Liberal leader Lord David Steel as a director, once employed ex-Labour minister Keith Vaz and is well known in top Labour circles. Multi-millionaire Auchi is expected to play a role in post-Saddam Iraq.

His exile credentials are impeccable. He left Iraq – where he had worked in the oil ministry – more than 20 years ago. Two of his brothers were executed or murdered by Saddam. Yet his name has cropped up in pre-Gulf War deals with Iraq where big commissions were paid.

This week in Paris a huge corruption trial involving payments made by the state-owned Elf oil group is due to begin. One of those payments relates to the 1990 purchase by Elf of the Spanish Ertoil refinery from its Kuwaiti owners via Auchi. A £40m profit/commission is said to have been paid on the way through to grease the deal. Three years ago the French issued an international warrant to arrest Auchi for questioning after he declined to go to France. French attempts to question him in Britain or extradite him were rejected by the home office on the grounds that the requests did not comply with British requirements. Auchi has denied any wrongdoing and his lawyers have always maintained he would be happy to help if the correct procedures were followed.

Auchi has also been linked to a 1986 bid to build a pipeline from Iraq to Saudi Arabia by a Franco-Italian group. A payment of up to £10m is said to have been made for obtaining the contract – reputedly with the help of Saddam's half-brother, Barzan al-Takriti.

Auchi also played an intermediary role in the purchase of Italian frigates by the Iraqi navy in 1980. Auchi claimed commissions of $17m on behalf of a Luxembourg company in 1982 from the Italian shipbuilding company Cantieri Navale Riuniti.

Once again Auchi denies any wrongdoing in these matters or that he worked with Barzan and disputes suggestions from other Iraqi exiles that he has continued to maintain contacts with the Saddam regime – blaming the fact that he has campaigned for the lifting of sanctions on humanitarian grounds.

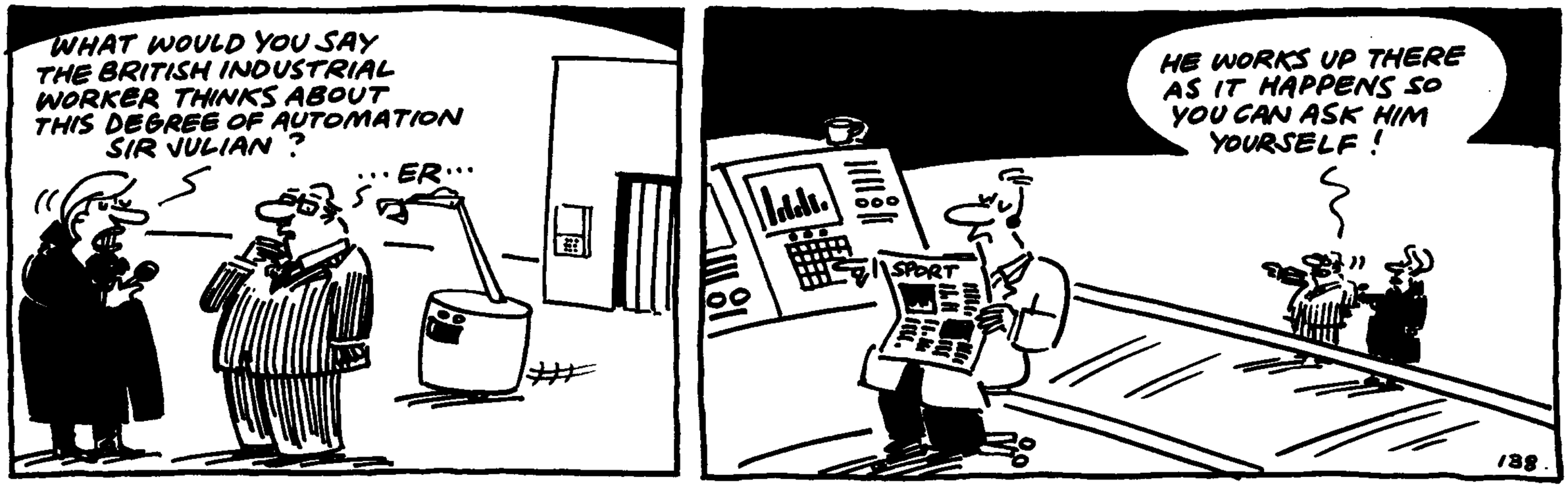
More embarrassing for his British political friends is that the GMH-controlled Regent Laboratories is under investigation by the Serious Farce Office over allegations of massive over-charging and price fixing of generic drugs. Regent and supposedly rival suppliers are also being sued for up to £400m in damages by the NHS.

Outside Iraq the end of the war will also launch the hunt for Saddam's billions creamed off from oil sales since he seized power. The focus of that search is likely, as ever, to be Switzerland and in particular the network of Iraqi businessmen who have been accused of acting as fronts for Iraq's external investments and bank deposits. This was a network supposedly masterminded by Barzan before he was recalled to Iraq.

One of those high on the list of targets is expected to be an Iraqi Christian businessman

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG


WHAT WOULD YOU SAY THE BRITISH INDUSTRIAL WORKER THINKS ABOUT THIS DEGREE OF AUTOMATION SIR JULIAN ?
... ER ...
HE WORKS UP THERE AS IT HAPPENS SO YOU CAN ASK HIM YOURSELF !
SPORT
138

Stock Horror

by 'Bruin'

Halliburton's fishy smell

Change in value since last summer of...

...US oil and construction company Halliburton*

+ £2.8bn

...the world's stock markets

– £673bn

*Just awarded the first US government contracts to rebuild Iraq after the war. Cheney quit as chairman/chief executive in 2000 (receiving £20m) to run for vice-president.

Hassum Rassam, who lives in considerable style with his family near Geneva. Rassam has always dismissed suggestions that he was "Saddam's banker"; but such denials have failed to convince British and US intelligence. Rassam's family have homes in Britain and corrupt Inland Revenue investigator Michael Allcock went house-hunting for him in Surrey. Rassam's relatives continue to have business interests in Britain. Exactly what Rassam's business interests are in Switzerland – other than the Lanvin concession in Geneva – has mystified local investigators.

But then given the curious history of Chalabi and Auchi, perhaps even Rassam will have a role to play in the democratic paradise that Iraq is about to become.

THE demise of one-time premiership relegation rivals Leicester City has cast further light on how the phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed has been keeping Fulham afloat. One of the Leicester City creditors is the German insurance group Gerling, which provided finance by the club using players as security.

In December 2000, just before Fayed began a near £40m player spending spree, Fulham raised money from a Guernsey company, Registered European Football Finance. The security for the loan was the "proceeds of sale of all eligible players". The unnamed players were on a list agreed between Fulham, the Guernsey company and – Gerling General Insurance. These players effectively belonged to the Guernsey company and Gerling. Leicester owed Gerling £4.1m on which it is likely to recover at best 40p in the £ and maybe only 10p. This shows the risks involved especially as the value of players can go down as well as up but the debt remains the same. It is very much finance of last resort.

Leicester's financial problems were precipitated by relegation from the premiership and the resulting collapse in all important TV money. It looks like Fulham will avoid relegation this season but with money tight and the re-development of Craven Cottage in question what if...

EMPLOYEES in the much reduced London offices of the nowadays less than Thundering Herd are becoming increasingly concerned at brokers Merrill Lynch's suspected plans to outsource all IT work, including trading and reporting systems, to India and/or replace UK staff with imported, very much cheaper Indian IT software specialists.

This has already happened in US companies amid allegations of visa abuses. Merrills already outsources IT maintenance and support work to one of India's largest software providers Tata Consultancy Services in Mumbai. A large number of TCS personnel are currently to be found in the London office evaluating the present IT systems. TCS is planning to float and – surprise, surprise – DSP Merrill is the appointed joint manager.

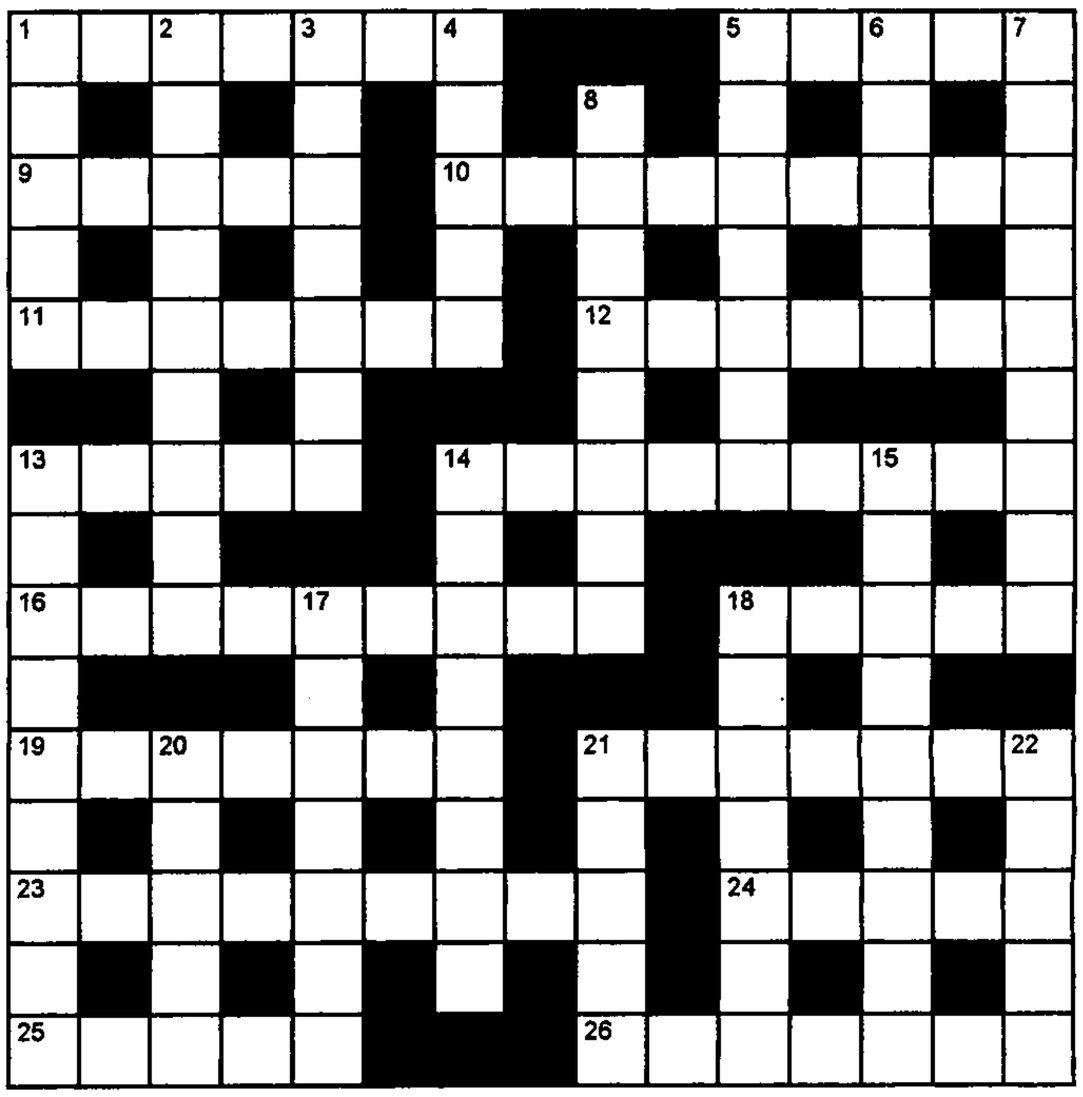
'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 231

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 28 March 2003.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1/5 '*Becoming bust,*' Roger notes (7,5)

9 Levi possibly longs to throttle the President (5)

10 Chris Evans, scourge of pussy (6,3)

11 Bland Ken's reported pet interest: abandoning transport (7)

12 Piss-artist with thousands initially invested in City's consumer offering (7)

13 Eric Dicky Penny once was a blubber producer (5)

14 One appears after a whore's filthy greeting (3,3,3)

16 Margaret since entertaining male with lashings of greens (9)

18 Air-conditioning in Bristol's silent (5)

19 Make someone disgusted – show the end of Mr Bean without a stimulant (7)

21/23 Really beat? Come off drugs and reveal sexual nature belonging to ... (4,3,4,3,2)

24 ... member (not black) before sex check (5)

25 Country's come to have a new leader (5)

26 Codicils: a good many by joint lawyer (7)

DOWN

1 Jumped student expelled – criminal (5)

2 Tony & co. (having elected to stand by George) having kittens? (9)

3 Loutish Cyclops is shortly going to colloquially shag without resistance (3-4)

4 Try and relieve yourself over Lawson's leader writer (5)

5 Hexametrist contraceptive machine possibly abandoned by Diana (7)

6 *Clitoris Intact* not subjected to censorship (5)

7 What good supporters do to a great extent (laughingly so?) (3,2,4)

8 Makes e.g. Brenda go topless, constitutionally (8)

13 Not wanting to be a poser, Chuck's after a snappy item (6-3)

14 Kate, the piss-poor cocaine-snorting journo? (8)

15 Edward Heath's 'wet' persona? (9)

17 Get puffed up as Branson likes to do (7)

18 Rock lick commandeered by Heath and given the old trout treatment (7)

20 Cassandra's dad's broadcast about breaking Blair (5)

21 Franz shafts female in two identical Fords (5)

22 One-time model gets arse reduced, though no film star (5)

Crossword 230 winner: SEAN O'NEILL

ACROSS: 1 Oral sex 5 Handbag 9 Eagle 10 Men-at-arms 11/12 Cream one's jeans 13 Orestes 15 Nobbled 17 Schizos 19 Press-up 20 Vulva 21 Throw a fit 23 Cheapjack 25 Cubic 26 Rat-a-tat 27 Dryness.

DOWN: 1 One across 2 Algae 3 Spermatozoa 4 Ximenes 5 Hands-on 6 Nut 7 Barnacles 8 Gasps 12 Jabberwocky 14 Ethelbert 16 Dipsticks 18 Sit fast 19 Peruked 20 Vicar 22 Fable 24 Pot.

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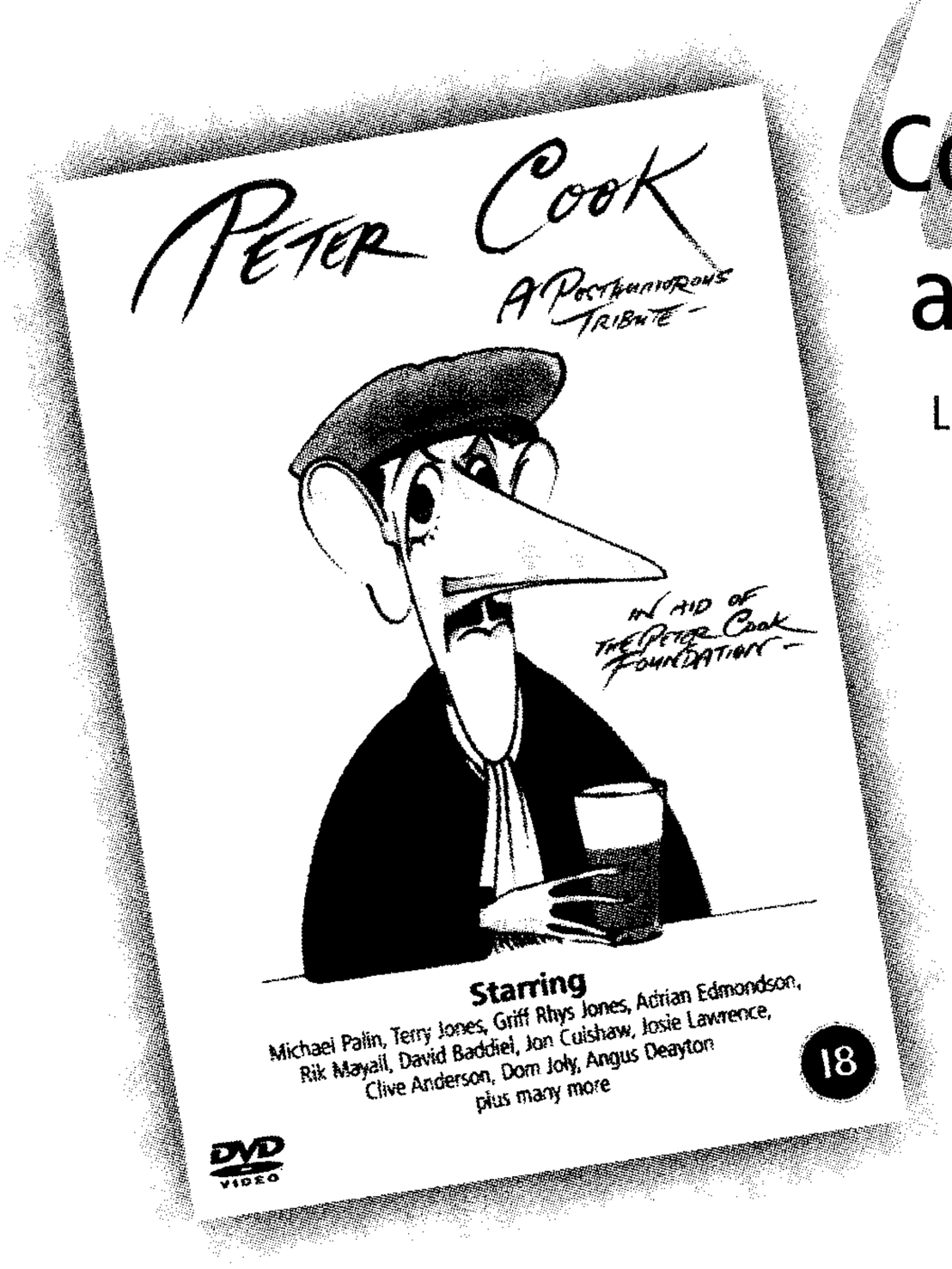
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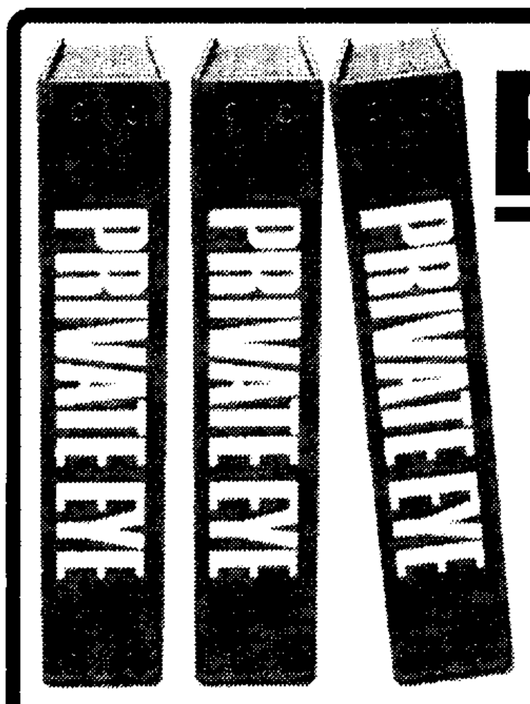

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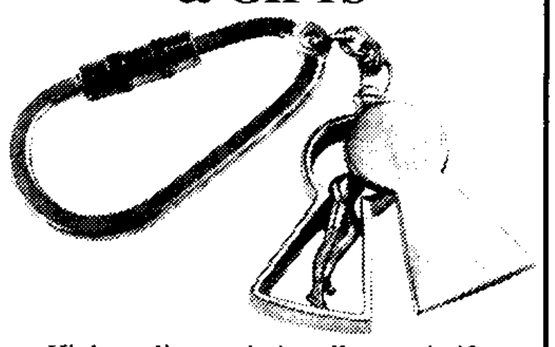

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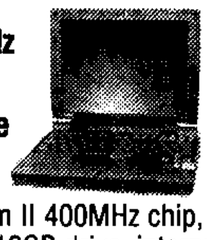

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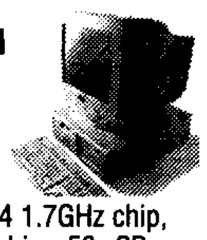

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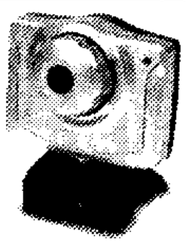

DRF-350C - Internet video camera, high resolution 350,000 pixel CCD, suitable for both desktops & laptops, IEEE 1394 connection - high bandwidth transfer, ideal for video conferencing.

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HANDSPRING TREO

PALMTOP/MOBILE PHONE

GSM compatible
Palm powered
Full featured
16MB RAM

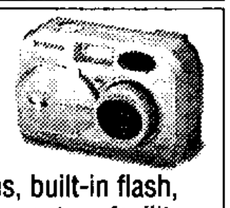
Handspring Treo - combined mobile phone & Palm powered organiser, dual band GSM, 100 hours stand-by, full featured organiser with QWERTY keyboard. Retail boxed - SIM free.

£149.99 EX | **£176.24 Inc VAT**

FUJI FINEPIX 2600

FUJI FP2600

2 Megapixel
3x optical zoom



1200 x 1600 dpi res, built-in flash, TFT screen & video capture facility. Grade A Fuji refurb - 1 year warranty.

£129.99 EX | **£152.74 Inc VAT**

FP2800: 2 Megapixel, 6x optical zoom lens. As new Fuji refurb - 1 year wty.

£169.99 EX | **£199.74 Inc VAT**

COMPACT CAMERA

EYE-Q DIGITAL CAMERA

Only 26mm thin!
3x optical zoom
Fully automatic
SLR style viewfinder

Concord compact digital camera, 3x optical zoom lens, Megapixel output via software, 4Mb on-board storage, SLR style viewfinder with image review, measures 55 x 102 x 26mm.

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EX-CORPORATE IMPORT

Intel PII 366MHz
CD-ROM drive
6GB hard drive
128MB RAM

With Intel Pentium II 366MHz chip, 256MB SDRAM, 6GB drive, internal CD-ROM, 13.3" TFT screen, 56K/LAN combo card. No op/sys or drivers, US keyboard layout (easy UK setup).

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FUJI FINEPIX A101

FUJI A101

1.3 Megapixel
Digital telephoto

1280 x 960 dpi res, built-in flash, macro mode & video capture facility. Grade A Fuji refurb - 1 year warranty.

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A201: 2 Megapixel, autoflash, TFT screen. As new Fuji refurb - 1 year wty.

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HP PAVILION 7920

HP STOCK ROTATION

Duron 900MHz
CD-RW & DVD
30GB hard drive
128MB SDRAM

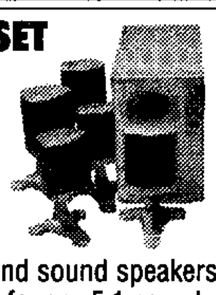
With AMD Duron 800MHz processor, 128MB SDRAM, 30GB hard drive, 16x DVD, 8x 4x 32x CD-RW, AGP graphics, 56K/V.90 modem, Microsoft Windows Me & Microsoft Works Suite 2001.

£349.99 EX | **£411.24 Inc VAT**

VIDEOLOGIC ZXR-500

6 SPEAKER SET

5.1 compatible
65W output
Ideal for DVDs
Integrated amp



Videologic surround sound speakers, the perfect partner for any 5.1 sound card/DVD player, 25W RMS subwoofer, 5x 8W RMS satellites. Boxed as new catalogue returns - 1 year warranty.

£39.99 EX | **£46.98 Inc VAT**

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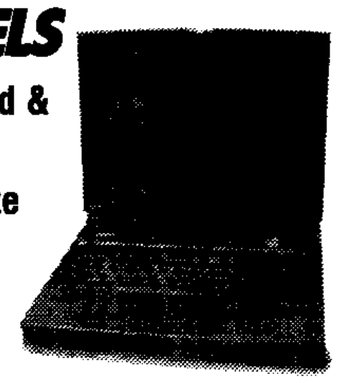
HUGE RANGE OF MODELS

- **Direct from Toshiba - as new, graded & ex-demo notebooks.**
- **Models include: Satellites, Satellite Pros, Tecras & Porteges.**
- **Massive savings off normal list**



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CUTIE & CHIPY!

CUTIE 20GB DRIVE

Pocket sized
USB interface

Cutie portable hard disk drive, 20GB capacity, USB interface - works with laptops & desktops, ideal for backups.

£129.99 EX | **£152.49 Inc VAT**

Chipy: Mobile phone SIM card reader & writer, backup/edit you phonebook.

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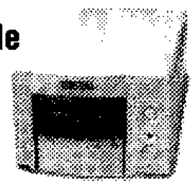
USB FILM SCANNER

£100 OFF MARKET PRICE!

Negative & slide scanning
2820 dpi res
USB interface



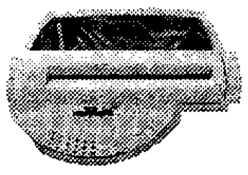
Minolta Dimâge Scan Dual II film scanner, scans 35mm negs/slides, 2820 dpi scanning res, 36 Bit colour depth. Retail boxed - Inc USB cable, drivers & Photoshop LE software.

£199.99 EX | **£234.99 Inc VAT**

DOCUMENT SHREDDER

PAPERMONSTER JUNIOR

A4 sized input
Auto feed
4 mm shred
Inc waste bin



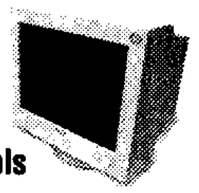
Papermonster Junior - personal shredder, A4 sized input, shreds up to 3 sheets at a time, 4 mm shred size - ideal for document security/protection, inc waste bin - 13L paper capacity.

£19.99 EX | **£23.49 Inc VAT**

TAXAN 19" CRT

DIAMONDTRON TUBE

1600 x 1200 max
.25mm dot pitch
18" visible area
OSD image controls



Taxan Ergovision 985 Diamondtron monitor, perfectly flat edge to edge display, .25mm dot pitch - excellent image quality, 1600 x 1200 @ 76Hz, full on-screen picture controls.

£129.99 EX | **£152.74 Inc VAT**

FUJI DIGITAL CAMERAS

FUJI FINEPIX MODELS

2200 2 Megapixel, 2.5x digital zoom, TFT screen.....**£69.99** (£82.24)

4800 4.3 Megapixel Super CCD, 3x optical zoom.....**£229.99** (£270.24)

6800 6 Megapixel Super CCD, 3x optical zoom.....**£279.99** (£328.99)

601 6 Megapixel Super CCD, 3x zoom, USB cradle.....**£299.99** (£352.49)

All units are factory refurbished by Fuji themselves to an excellent standard, with a 1 year Fuji warranty.

SUB £400 DELL PIII

COMPACT/LIGHT DESIGN

Only 1.1" thick
500MHz chip
128MB RAM
10GB hard drive

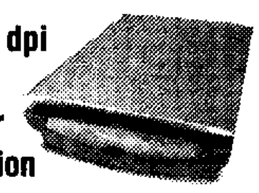
Dell CSX - Intel Pentium III 500MHz chip, 128MB RAM, 10GB drive, 24x CD-ROM drive, 13.3" TFT screen, 56K modem. No op/system or drivers, US keyboard layout (easy UK setup).

£399.99 EX | **£469.99 Inc VAT**

CANON D1230U

HIGH RES A4 SCANNER

1200 x 2400 dpi
A4 scan area
48 Bit colour
USB connection



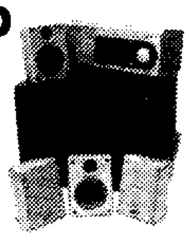
High quality A4 colour flatbed scanner, 1200 x 2400 dpi optical resolution, 48 bit internal colour depth, one touch scanning button, USB connection to PC for easy installation. Retail boxed.

£49.99 EX | **£58.74 Inc VAT**

VIDEOLOGIC DTS KIT

CINEMA SOUND

6 speaker system
220W RMS output
Built-in decoder
Ideal for DVDs



"Bowl moving volume" - Computer Buyer, excellent theatre style sound, 6 piece speaker system, ideal for DVD movies, built-in digital decoder. As new Videologic refurb - 1 year wty.

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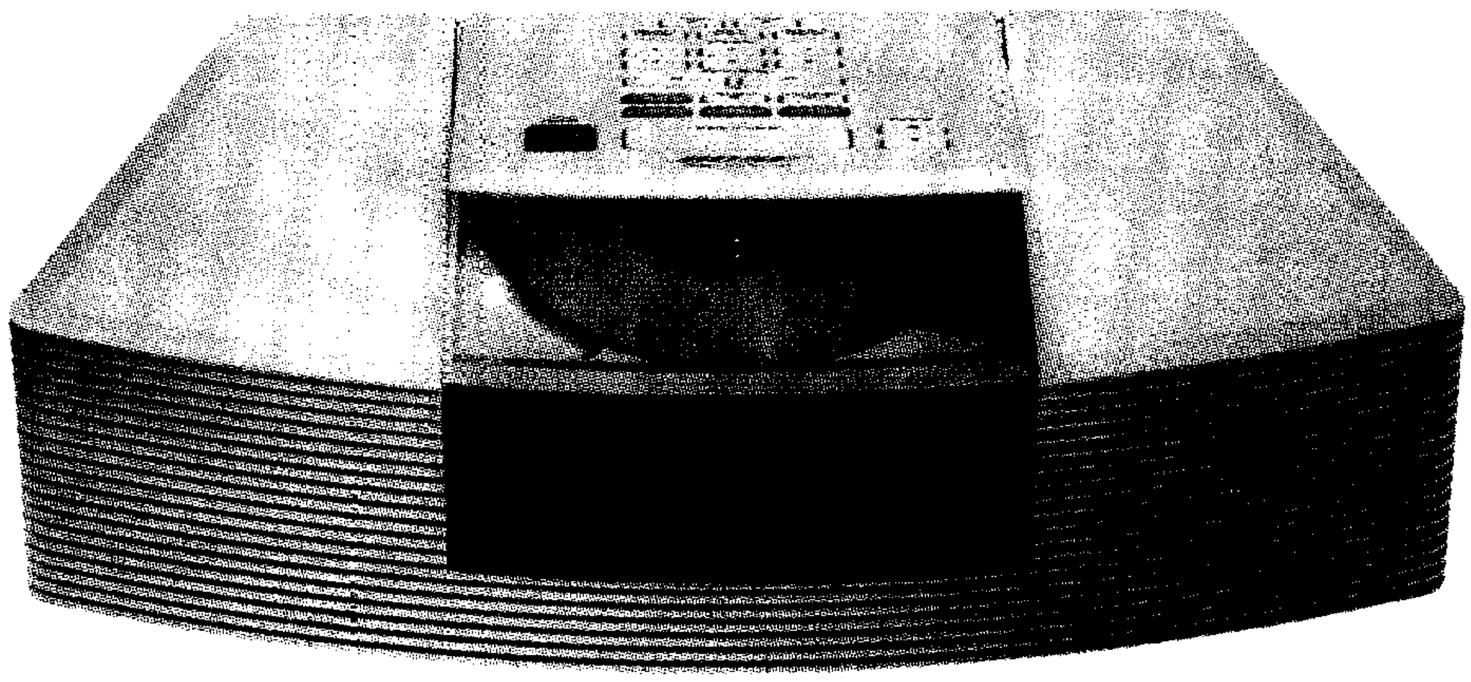

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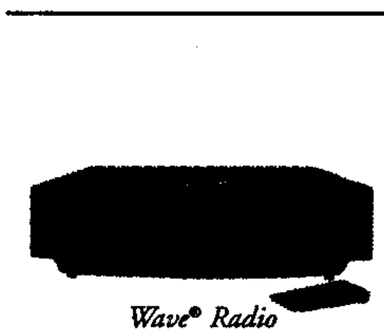

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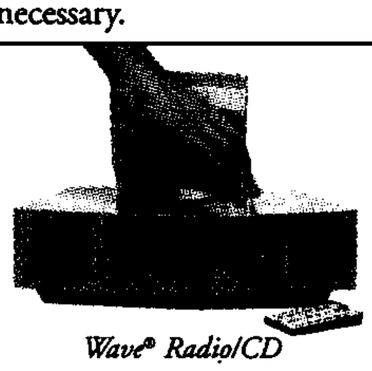

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